

Patient Information Sheet: Wrist Fractures

What Is a Wrist Fracture?

A wrist fracture is a break in one or more of the bones near the wrist joint. The most common is a distal radius fracture, which occurs when the larger of the two forearm bones breaks near the wrist. These injuries often happen after a fall onto an outstretched hand, during sports, or after trauma such as a car accident.

Common Symptoms

- Pain, especially when moving or pressing on the wrist
- Swelling and bruising
- Deformity or “bent” appearance
- Difficulty moving the wrist or fingers
- Tingling or numbness in the hand or fingers

Diagnosis

Your doctor will examine the wrist and order an X-ray. Occasionally, a CT scan or MRI may be used to check the exact position of the bones or to rule out other injuries.

Treatment Options

1. Non-Surgical (Conservative Treatment)

Used when the bone is well aligned or can be repositioned easily.

- The wrist is placed in a plaster cast or splint for 4–6 weeks.
- You may need follow-up X-rays to ensure the bone heals in the correct position.

2. Surgical Treatment

Needed if the fracture is displaced or unstable.

- Metal plates, screws, or pins are used to hold the bones in place.
- A splint or cast may still be required after surgery.

Recovery and Rehabilitation

- Pain relief: Use prescribed or over-the-counter painkillers as advised.
- Elevation: Keep your wrist raised (on a pillow) to reduce swelling.
- Movement: Begin gentle finger, elbow and shoulder exercises early to prevent stiffness.
- Physiotherapy: After the cast or splint is removed, exercises help restore strength and movement.
- Full recovery: Usually takes 8–12 weeks, though stiffness may persist longer.

When to Seek Medical Help

Contact your doctor or visit the emergency department if you experience:

- Increasing pain or swelling
- Numbness, tingling, or pale/cold fingers
- Cast feels too tight or becomes loose
- New deformity or loss of movement

Preventing Future Injuries

- Use wrist guards during high-risk sports.
- Maintain good bone health with calcium, vitamin D, and weight-bearing exercise.
- Take precautions to prevent falls (e.g., good footwear, home safety).

Please [Contact Us](mailto:info@basinghandclinic.co.uk) for further advice: info@basinghandclinic.co.uk