

# Removal of cast following a hand or wrist injury

## Patient Information

Physiotherapy Department

Author ID: SW  
Leaflet Ref: Tpy 043  
Version: 2  
Leaflet title: Removal of cast following a hand or wrist injury  
Date Produced: November 2023  
Expiry Date: November 2025



## Advice

It is usual to experience some swelling, discomfort and stiffness following the removal of a cast.

## Swelling

You can try the following to help to reduce swelling of the wrist and hand:

### Elevation

Raise the hand and arm on a pillow higher than your heart level. Bend and straighten your fingers in this position.

### Contrast bathing

Fill a bowl with warm water and another with cold water. Soak your hand in the warm water, bend and straighten your fingers 5 times and then soak your hand in the cold water, bend and straighten your fingers 5 times. Repeat the sequence 5 times, and then finish with one final go in the warm water. Take extra care if you have reduced sensation in your hand. Test the temperature of the water first with your unaffected hand.

## Pain

You should expect some degree of discomfort. Pain relieving medication should help to ease this. Ask the pharmacist in your local chemist if you need advice.

Using ice or heat can help to reduce pain:

### Ice

Place a damp tea towel over the painful area. Place a bag of frozen peas on top of the towel for 15-20 minutes.

### Heat

Place a microwaveable wheat bag or a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel over the painful area for 15-20 minutes.

**Check your skin regularly during treatment with ice or heat to prevent a skin burn. Take extra care if you have any reduced sensation in your hand or wrist.**

## Activity

Try to use the hand and wrist as normally as you can, and encourage your hand to 'join in' with activities. Start with light activities such as washing, dressing, fastening buttons, making a sandwich and eating. Initially, avoid more demanding activities, for example lifting a full kettle, changing bedding, lifting trays out of the oven. You can gradually progress to heavier activities as your symptoms allow and as your wrist becomes stronger.

You can drive when you are certain you have sufficient strength and control to do so safely.

Avoid heavy lifting and ball/contact sports as advised by your therapist.

## Range of Movement Exercises

It is very important that you do regular exercises to regain your range of movement and improve your function.

### Finger exercises

Bend your fingers towards your palm and then straighten them.  
Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.



## Thumb exercises

Starting with the index finger, touch the tip of each finger with your thumb. When you can reach the tip of your little finger, slide your thumb down the finger.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.



## Wrist exercises

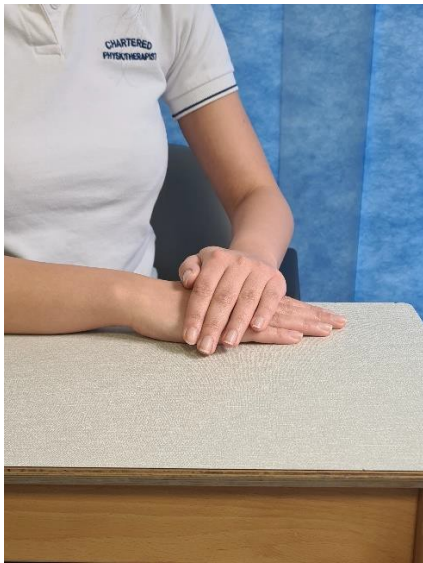
1. Place your wrist over the edge of the table / arm of a chair. Lift your wrist up and then bend it down.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.



2. Place your forearm on a table. Keeping the palm of your hand on the table, lift your elbow off the table.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.



3. Keeping your elbow by your side, turn your palm to face upwards and then turn your palm to face downwards.

Complete 10 repetitions, every 1-2 hours.



## Strengthening Exercises

As you start to progress your activities, you may find that your wrist feels weak. Below are some examples of some exercises that the therapist may advise you to complete to improve your grip and wrist strength.

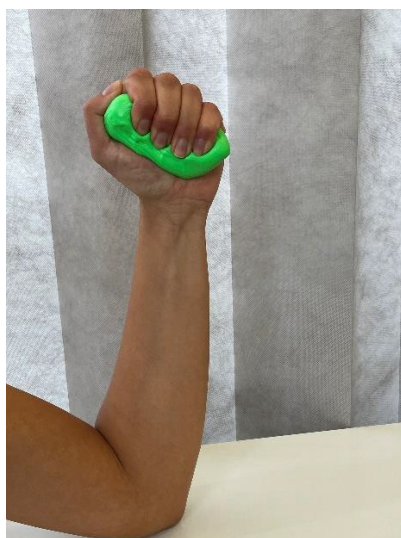
Prior to injury, different people would have varying degrees of wrist strength, based on several factors including age, sex, occupation, hobbies and pre-existing wrist and hand problems. These exercises may not be appropriate for all patients, and may need to be adapted to allow for pain following injury. You may need to consult the advice of a therapist before commencing the following exercises.

### Grip strengthening

1. Grip a rolled-up towel with both hands. 'Wring it out' in both directions. This can also be done in warm water, by wringing the water out of the towel.



2. Squeeze a ball of Theraputty or playdough in the hand. Squeeze 10 times regularly throughout the day.



3. Using an appropriate piece of exercise equipment (examples below) as advised by your therapist, squeeze 10 times regularly throughout the day. Progress to squeeze something with a greater resistance as your strength increases.



Small dog ring toy

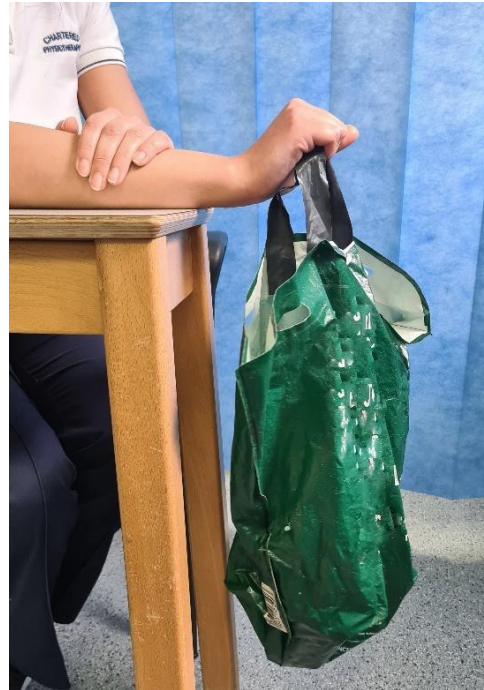


Grip strengthener 5-60kg



## Wrist strengthening exercises

1. Place some weight in a carrier bag such as a tin of soup. Hold the carrier bag with your fingers over the edge of a table, resting your forearm on the table. Slowly lift the carrier bag by bending your wrist back, keeping your forearm on the table. Slowly lower the bag. Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day. As your strength increases, place heavier objects in the bag.



2. Hold an object which has a cylindrical handle and has some weight at the end, for example a hammer or a small saucepan. Keeping your elbow by your side, rotate the object to one side and then the other, slowly and controlled. Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day.





## Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding injury, or whether or not you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your GP or therapist before starting any exercises shown in this leaflet.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and doesn't have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown in this leaflet are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference; they can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your therapist.

## Further Advice

It can take several months for you to notice a significant improvement in the range of movement and function of your wrist. By 3 months after injury, you should find that you can manage most day-to-day activities. Your wrist should continue to improve over the course of a year.

If you have been referred for further physiotherapy, please consult your therapist if you have any concerns:

Fracture Clinic Physiotherapy Team: 01942 822103

Wrightington Hand Therapy Team: 01257 488272

Boston House Health Centre Physiotherapy Department: 03007071113

Leigh Infirmary Physiotherapy Department: 03007071597

Platt Bridge Health Centre Physiotherapy Department: 03007071772

If you do not have any further follow up and you have any concerns, please contact:

Fracture Clinic Physiotherapy Team: 01942 822103

Fracture Clinic Nursing Team: 01942 822109

**If you have any urgent concerns out of hours, please call 111.**

---

## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan  
WN1 2NN

---

## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



---

## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

---

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

---

© Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.  
All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner.

**Call 111 first when it's less urgent than 999.**



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2021

*Proudly serving those who serve.*

Phone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212

[www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

