

**Patient
Information**

Soft tissue injuries affecting the wrist and hand

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you have a soft tissue injury to your wrist or hand.

What is a soft tissue injury?

A soft tissue injury is often caused by over stretching a muscle or ligament.

Soft tissue injuries often feel worse over the first couple of days and you may have bruising, pain and swelling. It is important you gently move your wrist, hand and fingers from the first day of injury to restore normal use as soon as possible.

During the first 5 days, the following advice is recommended:

- Remove any rings or tight wrist jewellery.
- Rest the injured part but continue using your hand for usual daily activities as the pain allows.
- Apply an ice pack wrapped in a damp towel for 10 minutes. Do not apply ice directly to skin as it can burn. Re-apply every 2 hours for the first 2 to 3 days. If the area becomes very painful, numb or tingles, remove the ice pack immediately. Do not reapply the icepack until the feeling in your skin has returned to normal.
- If there is a lot of swelling and you have pins and needles in your fingers, raising your hand to shoulder height should help to relieve the symptoms.
You may find wearing a sling is more comfortable but if pins and needles continue contact NHS 111 for advice.
- Take regular pain relief. Visit your local pharmacist for advice about pain relief.

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Exercises

The following exercises will help you to regain normal movement in your hand/wrist. When you first start the exercises, the discomfort may increase. Pain relief medication will relieve this. Start the exercises gently, usually 2 to 5 days after the injury, gradually increasing the movement over the following 3 weeks.

We advise that you do 10 repetitions of each exercise, 4 times a day until you have regained the normal use of your hand.



Bend your wrist backwards as far as you can.



Bend your wrist forwards as far as you can.



Move your hand from side to side as far as you can.



With your forearm on a table turn your palm gently to face the ceiling, curl and uncurl your fingers.



Move your thumb gently away from your palm.



Take your thumb to each of your fingertips in turn and slide your thumb down your little finger.

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When can I use my hand normally again?

Use your hand as soon as your symptoms allow for light activities, and gradually build back up to your normal levels of function.

Any mild discomfort should settle once your hand and wrist become stronger.

If you have been provided with a splint to immobilise the injured part while the healing takes place, these are usually removable and can be taken off to exercise your wrist/hand if advised to do so.

Remember

With soft tissue injuries there is a risk of an undetected fracture. If this is the case when we receive your X-ray report we will contact you. Your GP will also have access to your X-ray report. If your symptoms are not improving after 7 days, please return to the Emergency Department or your local Minor Injuries Unit to be reassessed.

Contact information

For further information about managing your injury, please contact:

Physiotherapy

Website: www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/services-we-offer/physiotherapy/how-can-i-see-physiotherapist/

NHS 111

Tel: 111

Further information

NHS choices

Website: www.nhs.uk

Arthritis Research UK

Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

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

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>