

Soft tissue injuries affecting the wrist and hand

Introduction

This leaflet is intended for patients who have been diagnosed with a soft tissue injury to the wrist or hand.

What is a soft tissue injury?

A soft tissue injury is an injury to a muscle, ligament or tendon. It is often caused by over stretching.

You are likely to experience swelling, pain, bruising and tenderness. Soft tissue injuries often feel worse over the first couple of days. It is important you gently move your wrist, hand and fingers from the first day of injury. This advice will help you 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 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 elevate your hand to shoulder height which 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, for further guidance please visit your pharmacist.

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**Patient
Information****Exercises**

These exercises will help you to regain normal movement in your hand/wrist. As the exercises may initially increase your discomfort, you may wish to take some pain relief. Start the exercises gently usually 2 to 5 days after the injury and gradually increase 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. It is normal to feel mild discomfort at first, but this should gradually settle once your hand and wrist become stronger.

In addition to the advice in this leaflet, you may have been provided with a splint to immobilise the injured part to give it extra protection whilst 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 and usually we will contact you, should this be the case.

Your GP will also have access to your X-ray report but 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

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Further information

NHS choices

Website: www.nhs.uk

Arthritis Research UK

Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

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