

# **Wrist Fracture Instruction Sheet**

Dr. Solberg's Office Number is **213-455-8448**.

This information should be useful after your wrist surgery. Please read this information carefully. You will receive further instructions at your next visit. The following items cover what to expect and what to do for the first week after surgery.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Expect your hand to be quite stiff and sore for the first few days. Try to keep your arm elevated as much as possible. You should begin moving your fingers the first day after surgery.

You have been given a long acting local anesthetic around the incision. It will often last 6-8 and sometimes as long as 12 hours. It may cause part of your hand to be numb after surgery. This will subside when the local anesthetic wears off. This tends to happen very quickly so make sure you take your pain medication regularly and take an extra dose when you begin to feel the anesthetic begin to wear off. When this happens you will feel a tingling sensation in your fingers (this feels similar to when your hand falls asleep after laying on it for a long period of time).

Apply ice to your hand/ wrist for the first 48 hours after surgery. You should expect some swelling in your hand and fingers on the affected side as well as some bruising in the forearm, this is perfectly normal. This will subside when you begin to move your hand more.

## **PAIN MEDICATION**

Take your pain medication as directed by your prescription. Do not wait until the pain is intolerable to take the medication. It will take between 30-60 minutes to begin working, so take it accordingly. You may combine your pain medication with an anti-inflammatory

medication for a synergistic effect (the effect of the combination is more than each of the separate components). I recommend over the counter Advil or Aleve and these can be taken safely in conjunction with your prescription. If you want to combine your prescription with Advil or Motrin, take 3 tablets (600 mg) three times a day, if you are using Aleve (naproxen) take two tablets (440 mg) twice a day. Make sure you take these medications with food to avoid stomach upset.

### CAST CARE

Most patients will have a splint on their wrist after surgery. This is a partial cast that is made of a kind of "sandwich" of plaster. The skin is wrapped in a soft cotton layer with a strip of hard plaster running down on the back side and palm side of your hand. The splint is made to allow some swelling without damaging the skin or tissue around your surgery site. Sometimes there will be a small bloodstain on the bandage especially near the palm. This is normal. The splint is designed to wick blood away from your skin and out to the surface of the cast. **Do not get the cast wet, the plaster will soften and the padding will stay wet.** This can delay the healing process if it occurs. If you do get the splint damp, take a hair dryer on cool setting and blow it into the wet area.

Although the splint is designed to allow for some swelling of the hand and wrist after surgery there are some instances when the splint becomes too tight. If this happens you will feel like the splint is squeezing your hand or wrist excessively and you may begin to feel tingling or worsening pain from the cast being too tight. If this happens during office hours, come directly into the office for a cast check and or change. Don't worry about making an appointment, we can sort this out later. If this happens in the evening or at night the first thing to do is cut through the outer layer of the splint (usually this is a light tan colored wrap that looks like an ace bandage). Once this is cut you can spread the plaster slabs apart slightly. If your pain continues after these steps you need to go to the closest emergency department and have them remove the splint and apply a new one.

When showering or bathing cover the cast or splint with a plastic bag and make sure the top is sealed with at least 2-3 rubber bands. This will keep water from getting into the cast from above.

There are several companies which manufacture cast covers. These are more form fitting and work better than plastic bags, but also cost more than trash bags. I have included three web sites below that sell covers over the internet.

### *Cast Cover Web Sites*

<http://castcoversnow.com/>

<http://www.nextag.com/waterproof-cast-covers/search.html>

<http://www.brokenbeauties.com/fashion-new/castcovers-arm.php>

### **SLEEPING AND ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS**

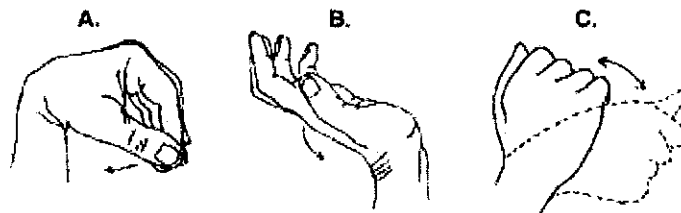
If you're having trouble falling asleep you can take a gentle over the counter sedative such as Benadryl or Unisom. These can be taken safely with your pain medication and help you to fall asleep more quickly.

Don't drink alcohol with the pain medication or sleep aid as this can be dangerous.

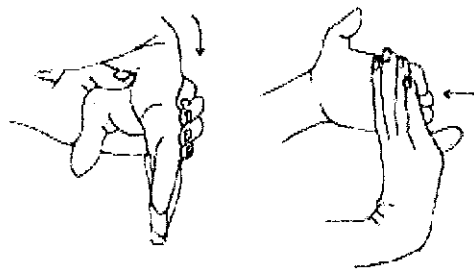
Do not lift anything heavier than a coffee cup. You can use your arm for writing, working on the computer and fine motor tasks such as manipulating small objects but do not attempt to lift anything heavier than about a pound. This can create stress on the surgical repair and can lead to injury.

Begin to gently move your fingers as soon as you can. Your motion should improve a little bit every day. Start by flexing and extending your fingers gently until all your motion has returned. Then begin on getting your grip strength back by squeezing gently on a soft ball or sponge. Avoid squeezing exercises until the incision has stopped oozing. Below are a set of exercises you can begin doing after you remove the bandage. Do these exercises 2-3 times a day; plan to spend about 10 minutes each time you do the exercise. Make sure you take some pain medication before you do the exercise as they may cause more irritation.

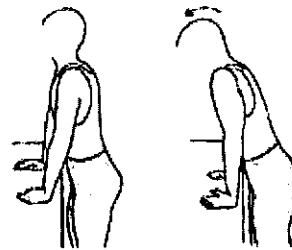
I put some gentle wrist stretching exercises below that you can start doing once your splint comes off. If you have a splint on after surgery, just work on finger motion.



**Wrist: Active range of motion**



**Wrist stretch**



**Wrist extension stretch**



**Wrist flexion stretch**



**Pronation and supination of the forearm**

**Call Dr. Solberg's Office if you notice any of the following symptoms.** You may be connected with an associate if you are calling in the evening hours. Have your discharge orders and description of your procedure available.

Temperature over 101° Fahrenheit

Persistent numbness in your hand

Increasing, severe pain in the hand

Increasing redness around the incisions

You have been prescribed pain medication which has a number of side effects. Most common are drowsiness, nausea and or vomiting, itching, constipation and irritability. If these are prolonged or severe, your pain medication may need to be changed. You must contact our office during business hours to have a prescription refilled or a new prescription dispensed. After hours (after 5:00 pm or weekends), the on call doctor will not give you a refill or a new pain medication prescription.