

Distal Radius Fractures

Updated March 2020

SPLINT OR CAST

- At all times for 2-6 weeks.
- The length of time and the type of immobilization (cast versus splint) will depend on how badly broken your bone is, the type of surgery you had done and how strong your bone is.
- Do not wear a shoulder sling.
- It is normal for your cast or splint to feel loose after a few days.

PHYSICAL THERAPY:

- Start formal physical therapy when orders are given after your first post-operative appointment.
- Do the below listed exercises before physiotherapy starts.

WOUND CARE:

Splint:

- Leave your splint on.

Shower:

- You may shower at any time, keeping your cast or splint dry.
- After bandages have been removed you may shower without covering incision sites, keep out of direct spray from water and pat dry.
- **NO soaking in bathtub/hot tub or pool for first 2-3 weeks, even if you are allowed out of your splint.**

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION:

- Excessive or worsening pain, increased redness around the incision sites, drainage from incisions that looks like pus and/or is foul smelling, if fever runs above 38.5°C.
- If any of the above symptoms occur call Central Alberta Orthopedics at 403-309-2001 or go to the emergency department right away.

CONTROL OF PAIN AND SWELLING:

Pain Medication:

- For the first few days take your pain medication regularly as instructed, then wean as tolerated. Avoid taking pain medications on an empty stomach, as it can make you nauseous.
- Wean yourself off of Percocet/Tramacet/Tylenol No. 3 to Extra Strength Tylenol (acetaminophen) by **Day 5** after surgery.

Elevation

- Elevate your wrist **above the level of your heart** as often as you can.

PREVENTING BLOOD CLOTS

- Make sure you get up and walk around as much as possible; mobilizing prevents clots.
- Take the blood thinner your surgeon prescribed.

Signs and Symptoms of Blood Clots:

- Severe and worsening pain and swelling in calf muscle.
- If any of the above symptoms occur call Health Link at 8-1-1 or go to the emergency department right away.

POST OPERATIVE EXERCISES (MAY START 1ST DAY AFTER SURGERY):

Elbow Range of Motion

- With elbow bent at 90°, bend and straighten elbow as though brushing something off the front of you. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.

Shoulder Range of Motion

- Raise your arm as high as you can above your head, bending at the shoulder.
- Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.

Grip Strengthening

- Make as tight of a fist as you can.
- Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.
- The goal is to make a complete fist by your two week appointment.

DRIVING

- No driving while you are required to wear your splint or cast.
- You may return to driving a vehicle (non-commercial) when you are no longer affected by pain, no longer wearing a splint or brace, under the influence of pain medications, able to **fully weight bear on your affected arm**, and are confident that you can react appropriately in an emergency.

EXPECTED RECOVERY

- Return to seated work 4 days after surgery
- Return to use of wrist for household chores 4-8 weeks
- Return to heavy occupational/labor activity 6-12 weeks

Due to the anesthetic, for the next 24 hours: Do NOT drive, sign legal documents, provide child care on your own or consume alcohol.