

Wrist Soft Tissue Injury

Information for patients

You have sustained a soft tissue injury to your wrist. Following this type of injury, you may also experience symptoms from the surrounding soft tissues which will have also been affected.

Healing:

Soft tissue injuries take 6-12 weeks to heal. It is recommended you start weaning out of your splint (if provided) as soon as possible and begin resuming normal activities in a graded manner as symptoms allow. It is advised you do not participate in sporting or heavy manual tasks for 6-12 weeks post injury depending on your symptoms, after which a graded return is recommended. It will take time for your previous level of exercise tolerance and confidence to return.



Pain, stiffness and swelling:

Pain, stiffness, swelling and bruising are very common and reflect your body's normal healing processes; which in turn tend to settle down as the weeks progress. Your symptoms will progressively improve but may continue for up to 3-6 months as you regain your normal activity levels. However, too much swelling causes problems such as pain and loss of finger movement. Here are some suggestions to help you manage your symptoms:

- Elevate your wrist above the level of your chest regularly and avoid hanging your arm by your side for prolonged periods
- Try to rest your wrist (but move your fingers regularly) for the first 24-72 hours to allow the early stages of healing to begin after which, modify your activity within the limits of your symptoms. Complete rest is **not** advisable as it is important for you to move the wrist from the early stages of your injury to prevent stiffness. Try and participate in normal activities such as dressing, washing and eating but be cautious of gripping and lifting heavy objects as this may aggravate your symptoms in the early stages.
- A cold compress (see advice on Cold Packs below)
- It is important during your recovery that you take regular pain relief. Do not wait until your pain is severe before you start taking pain relief as it will not be as effective. If you need further advice please speak to your GP or pharmacist.

Please note, it can take many months for all of the swelling to completely settle in the wrist and hand. See [Initial Injury Advice](#) below.

Follow up:

We do not routinely follow up patients with this type of injury as they heal well on their own with time and appropriate self-management. If after 6 weeks you feel you have not made significant improvement, please seek further medical advice.

Initial Injury Advice:

Cold packs

A cold pack (ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin. Ice placed directly on the skin can cause skin damage/ice burns. If you have reduced sensation in your upper limbs or an open wound please do not use ice treatment.

Stop applying ice if you experience any negative effects such as:

- An increase in pain
- Increased swelling
- Increased skin soreness

Pacing

Rest is as important to recovery as exercise. Pace yourself by slowly increasing the activity you do with your affected hand. Start the exercises as indicated and build up to do a bit more each day as your symptoms allow. If you do not grade your return to your previous levels of activity you may aggravate your injury and prolong the rehabilitation period. Therefore, minimise aggravating factors and adapt activities to fit in with your symptoms. Do not force through pain. Please see our leaflet on [Pacing](#) for further information.

The numerical pain rating scale below may help guide your return to activities or progression of exercises.



If your pain is mild to moderate when doing the activity, after the activity and the next day then you can continue to progress. If severe to worst after the activity and/or the next day you may want to consider slightly reducing how much you are doing.

Pain Management

It is important during your recovery that you take regular pain relief to promote restoration of normal movement and sleep. Do not wait until your pain is severe before you start taking pain relief as it will not be as effective. If you need further advice please speak to your GP or pharmacist.

Nutrition

The healing process requires lots of energy and minerals from our diet and your body needs more than the normal daily calories to both function and heal. It is important to keep up a healthy, balanced diet with protein, fresh fruit and vegetables. The vitamins and nutrients provided will help towards your recovery.

Smoking & Alcohol

Healing tissue times are very well established to be impaired by nicotine found in tobacco and vapes. Finding a way to cut down your intake even marginally, even if for the first few weeks after injury will make for a quicker recovery.

For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to the following website One You Kent Smokefree www.oneyoukent.org.uk Tel: 0300 1231220 or discuss this with your GP.

Similarly, alcohol consumption above the recommended national guidance of 14 units of alcohol per week can impair healing directly and influence the ability of every major organ in the body to function normally, each one playing a vital role in healing.

Please follow the Rehabilitation Plan shown below:

This rehabilitation plan is a **guide only** and dependent on the severity of your symptoms. If your symptoms fully resolve you may return to your previous activities of daily living including sporting activities at an earlier stage. Let your symptoms guide you as to what is appropriate for you and refer to the section above on pacing.

0-2 weeks

- Use your hand as able for activities of daily living
- Wean from the splint as symptoms allow
- Follow the '[Initial Injury Advice](#)' above
- Begin [Exercise Plan](#) below

2-6 weeks

- Continue a graded return to activities as your symptoms allow
- You should be able to stop wearing the splint during this period
- Continue to progress through the exercises

6-12 weeks

- The injury should be largely healed
 - Phase in with caution higher impact activities such as throwing, catching, lifting or strong gripping as these may aggravate your symptoms initially
 - It is normal to still have some discomfort and swelling at this stage
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Exercise Plan from Day 1:

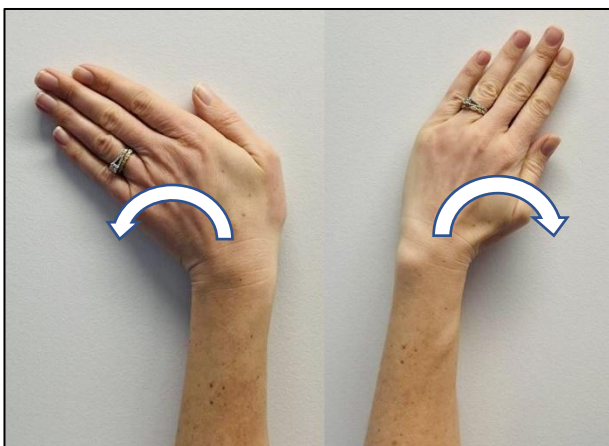
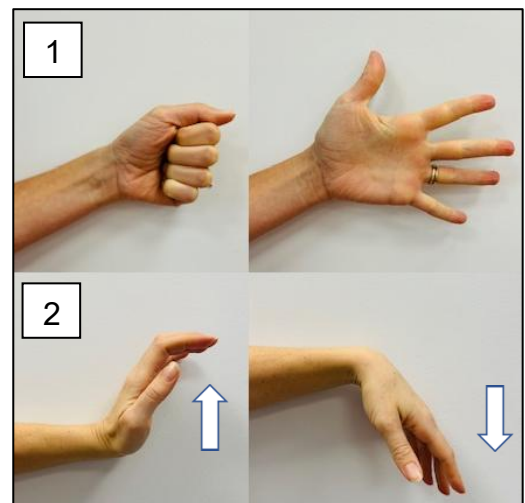
Follow the exercises below 3-4 times daily. It is normal to feel discomfort following exercise however, it is important you do not aggravate your symptoms. Exercise at your own pace and not through persistent pain. Please refer to the numerical pain score above for guidance, you should be aiming to be within the 'moderate' category.

You do not have to do all the exercises in one go try to select a few to carry out at different times of the day. Also, do not feel you have to copy the full movement of the exercise on your first go. The exercises are to be used as a guide only, over time build up gradually until you can achieve the full movement as shown below. You may find the following exercises easier to do after soaking your wrist in warm water for 10-15 minutes first in the early stages of your recovery.

Wrist and Hand Range of Movement:

1. Open and close your hand 5-10 times.
2. Move your wrist up and down as far as comfortable 5-10 times

You may use your unaffected hand to assist/gently stretch your affected wrist in the early stages



Wrist Ulnar and Radial Deviation:

Sitting with your hand on a flat surface, palm facing down and fingers closed together. Move your wrist side to side, first towards your little finger then towards your thumb as far as feels comfortable. Repeat 5-10 times

Finger abduction/adduction:

With your fingers straight and palm flat. Open and close your fingers as shown in the picture

Repeat 5-10 times

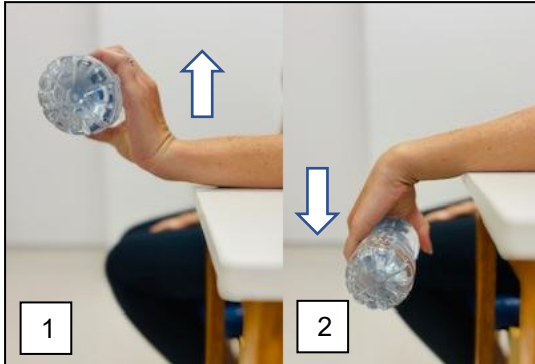


Elbow Range of Movement:

1. In sitting or standing, bend and straighten your injured arm as your symptoms allow. You can use your other hand to support your elbow in the early stages if required. Repeat 5-10 times
2. In sitting or standing, with your elbow at 90 degrees (a right angle) and palm facing downwards. Turn your palm to face upwards as your symptoms allow. You can use your other hand to support your elbow in the early stages if required. Repeat 5-10 times.

Exercise Plan 6 weeks onwards:

The following strengthening exercises can be started from 6 weeks from the date of your injury as symptoms allow, gradually building up as able.



Wrist flexion/extension with a weight:

Sitting, resting your forearm on a table and holding a small weight (such as a bottle) palm facing downwards. Lift your hand slowly upwards as in picture 1. Then slowly moving your hand downwards as in picture 2. Repeat 8-12 times, 2-3 sets.

Elbow supination/pronation with a weight:

Standing holding a small weight (such as a bottle) in the hand of your injured arm. Bend your elbow to 90 degrees at your side. Start with your palm facing upwards as in picture 1. Keeping your elbow at your side, turn your palm to face downwards as in picture 2. Repeat 8-12 times, 2-3 sets.



Elbow flexion/extension with a weight:

Standing holding a small weight (such as a bottle) in the hand of your injured arm. Start with the arm straight by your side, then bend your arm up towards your shoulder. Slowly return to start position. Repeat 8-12 times, 2-3 sets.

Further information and advice can be obtained from:

List any appropriate support groups / telephone / web / email addresses.

NHS 111

 111

NHS Choices online

www.nhs.uk

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 **0300 123 1220**

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Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone:  01622 224960 or  01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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