

# Care of your wrist & hand following a fracture

## Te manaaki i tō kawititanga o te ringa me tō ringa i muri i te tāwhatiwhati

Not all wrist and hand fractures are the same. It's important that you listen to the advice the medical staff give you.

If you have any questions, ask your hand therapist, physiotherapist, doctor or orthopaedic nurse.

After your cast is removed, you may notice that your wrist and fingers have reduced strength and movement, the skin on your hand and fingers is dry and scaly and your wrist aches.



## Skin

If your forearm is dry and flaky, wash your hand and forearm in warm soapy water then apply hand cream.

## Splints and bandages

If you're given a splint or bandage, this should only be for short-term use (up to two weeks if needed). Remove it for exercise sessions and at night.

## Movement and strength

Even though your wrist and hand may feel weak and painful, it's important that you use your hand for light and gradually heavier activities. Over four to six weeks, your motion and strength should increase and your ability to do everyday activities should improve.

To start with, you'll have difficulty lifting heavy objects, such as a pan of potatoes, but by gradually increasing how much you use your hand, your hand will improve.

Short, frequent use to start with is best. If you have a lot of discomfort after activities, soaking your arm in warm water may help ease this.

## Hand exercises

These are exercises that will help increase the range of movement of your wrist and hand, and therefore your function.

Do each exercise 10 times with a rest in between. Repeat four to six times a day sitting at a table. You can do the finger exercise with your splint on but you'll need to take your splint off to do the other exercises. You should move as far as you can comfortably without causing too much pain.



## Finger exercise

(you can do this exercise with your splint on)

- Make a full fist then stretch your fingers out straight.
- With your fingers straight, spread them wide apart then squeeze them together.



## Thumb exercise

- Touch your thumb to the tip of your little finger, then stretch it as far away as you can.



## Wrist flexion and extension

- With your fingers relaxed, bend your wrist forward and backward.



## Pronation and supination

- Rotate your forearm so the palm of your hand faces towards you, then rotate it so your palm faces away from you.



Written by Orthopaedic Outpatients and Physiotherapy Departments, Canterbury DHB. Adapted by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed June 2022.