

Distal Radius Fractures (Non-Displaced)

Fact Sheet

Information contained in this fact sheet is a guideline for care only. Please consult with your doctor or health professional to make sure that this information is right for you

Your fracture

The radius is one of two bones in the forearm that that extend from the wrist to the elbow. It is on the same side as your thumb. A fracture of the distal radius is a break at the wrist end of your arm.

Your fracture has been assessed as a simple, non-displaced fracture which does not require specialist orthopaedic care. You will likely make a good recovery.

Treatment

- The wrist and forearm may be immobilised in a cast or splint for approximately 4 – 6 weeks. This is done to maintain normal bone position, prevent movement of the radius bone and allow for healing to occur.

Make a plan with your GP or treating clinician for your cast to be removed after 4 – 6 weeks.

- Some fractures may benefit from hand therapy. A hand therapist can provide exercises to regain range of motion, strength and function. Your treating clinician would have referred you if necessary.

Healing Timeframe

A simple distal radius fracture usually heals very well. Healing times may vary, but on average total healing can take 12 weeks.

If your pain is still not settling after 4 weeks, please see your GP for advice.

Getting Back to Normal

- Elevate your wrist and maintain gentle movements when possible to relieve swelling and prevent stiffness. Feeling tightness, stiffness or discomfort as you start to move your wrist is normal.
- It sometimes can take 6 months or longer to regain full wrist movement.

After a Cast or Splint

Your wrist may:

- be stiff, but should improve with gentle movement and exercises
- feel weak. A light bandage, tubigrip or splint can be applied for a short time for support
- be dry and itchy – warm soapy water and a gentle moisturiser can be used.

Pain Relief and Comfort

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol can be used.

When can I...?

Play sport	Usually 2-3 months after plaster removal
Use full grip strength	After 6-12 weeks
Return to work	Consult your doctor
Drive	Consult your doctor

The above timeframes are a guide only and do not apply to all distal radius fractures.

Worries or concerns

For any immediate concerns or questions regarding your injury please contact:

- Your General Practitioner (GP). They are able to speak directly to an Orthopaedic team at Redcliffe Hospital or Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital if required.
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for health advice, triage and referral from a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH provides access to interpreting services for callers not confident with English.

In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

