

Advice following a fracture to your metacarpal neck

You have fractured (broken) one of the bones in your hand called the metacarpal at its 'neck'.

This normally takes up to six weeks to heal. During this period, it is important that you follow the rehabilitation plan on the following pages. Following your rehabilitation plan will help to prevent further injury and help to improve your function.

The knuckle of your hand near your fracture may always look different after this injury - this will not affect how you can do things.

Completing the exercises is important to prevent your hand and fingers from becoming stiff.

It is advisable to take your pain killers as prescribed to enable you to complete your exercises.

Splint: You may have been given a splint for comfort and to protect your fracture while it is still healing.

Function: You should avoid heavy tasks with your injured hand for six weeks.

Driving: You can return to driving when you don't need your splint anymore, and you feel confident in safely controlling your vehicle.

Please contact us if:

1. If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan.
2. If after six weeks you are still experiencing significant pain, swelling or having difficulty moving your hand or fingers.

3. If you are experiencing pain or symptoms other than at the site of the original injury or surrounding area.
4. If you have any questions.

The contact numbers are at the end of this advice sheet.

Smoking Cessation:

Medical evidence suggests that smoking prolongs fracture healing time. In extreme cases it can stop healing altogether. It is important that you consider this information with relation to your recent injury. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury. For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to the following website: <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> or discuss this with your GP.

Until 3 weeks post injury:

Unless otherwise instructed, keep your hand in the plaster or splint you have been given.

Keep your hand elevated so that your hand is higher than your elbow – this will prevent and help swelling.

Move any unaffected joints (ie, shoulder, elbow, any fingers not in the splint) – this will prevent stiffness and tightness.

After 3 weeks:

Do the following exercises regularly – every 1-2 hours out of your splint:



1. Bend the 'big' knuckles then straighten your fingers x 5.



2. 'Hook' the tips of all your fingers, then straighten your fingers x 5.



3. Try to make a fist, then straighten your fingers x 5.



Bend your wrist forwards, backwards and side to side x 5. If you have a splint, wear it in between the exercise. If not, try not to use your hand too much, as it may swell and / or become more painful.

WATCH OUT FOR:

When you bend your injured finger, if it is curling over one of your other fingers, please let us know.

If your finger looks 'wonky', let us know.

After 4 weeks:

If you are wearing a splint, try to wean out of it. Continue with your exercises as above.

Start using your hand a little bit more, but if you get pain at the fracture site, or if your hand swells, this means you have done too much, so rest and elevate your hand. Gradually resume your normal activities as pain allows.

You may be able to start the following exercises if your hand is not too painful:



Push the big knuckles down using your other hand while curling your fingers in.



Push on the tips of your fingers to make them bend more.



Push on all your fingers together using your other hand to make a full fist.

At 8 weeks:

Your fracture should be almost healed, but not strong.

Complete normal activities.

Heavier or more strenuous tasks, including heavy lifting, may still be difficult and cause discomfort and swelling at this stage.

If your hand feels weak, try the following exercises:

Use a sponge ball or something similar like rolled up socks or a rolled up towel to squeeze.

Open and close your hand with an elastic band around your fingers and thumb.

Avoid heavy activities and sport until 8-10 weeks.

At 12 weeks:

Return to contact sports. Symptoms will continue to improve over the next few months.

If you are still experiencing significant pain and / or stiffness please contact us for further advice / management.

Phone Plastics Rehabilitation (Hand Therapy) on: 01392 402429.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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