

WHAT IS A DISTAL RADIUS FRACTURE?

A distal radius fracture is a break of the radius bone at the wrist. This injury is usually caused by a fall on an outstretched hand. The severity of a distal radius fracture can range from a simple non-displaced fracture which does not involve the joint surface, to a comminuted fracture where the end of the radius is broken into many pieces and may be significantly out of alignment.

HOW IS A DISTAL RADIUS FRACTURE TREATED?

Displaced fractures usually require surgery but non-displaced fractures, where the bone is still in good alignment, can be managed in the following way:

Your wrist will be immobilised in a custom-made splint or cast which is typically worn full time for 6 weeks. (Some fractures which are very stable may be suitable for a small amount of gentle movement from around 4-5 weeks. Your doctor or hand therapist will be able to advise if your fracture is suitable for early movement)

In the first 2 weeks after your fracture, it is advisable to elevate your hand above the level of your heart as much as possible to help reduce swelling in your hand and wrist. You may use your hand for light activities while you are in the cast as tolerated.

CAN I DRIVE WITH MY SPLINT ON?

You should not drive whilst wearing a splint or cast. In the unlikely event of an accident your insurance may not cover you if you are wearing a splint or cast.

WHAT EXERCISES ARE REQUIRED FOLLOWING DISTAL RADIUS FRACTURE?

While you are wearing your splint or cast, it is important to perform gentle exercises for your fingers and thumb to prevent them from becoming stiff. You should also turn your palm up and down within comfort. Following removal of your splint or cast, your wrist will be stiff and weak. It is helpful to apply a heat pack to your wrist before performing your exercises. The initial focus is on restoring mobility to your wrist followed by strengthening exercises. Our hand therapists can assist with providing the most beneficial exercises for the stage of your recovery.



Non-displaced fracture of the Distal Radius



Custom-made Thermoplastic Splint