Colles Fracture of the Wrist

Patient Advice Leaflet

Fracture Clinic
Arrowe Park Hospital

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille and on tape.
Please contact Geoff Pennock on 0151 604 7289.

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Author: JST
Date of Publication: April 2013
Date for Review: April 2015

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Colles Fracture

Colles Fracture is a common fracture of the wrist. It is usually caused by falling onto an outstretched hand. Particularly at risk are middle-aged to elderly women who may suffer from the bone weakening disease, Osteoporosis.

Signs of a Fracture:
• Swelling just above the wrist is common.
• Inability to move the hand due to pain.
• The wrist may be pushed back resulting in a deformity of the wrist.

Diagnosis & Treatment:
Your hand will be examined and x-rays will be taken to show the extent & position of the fracture. This will determine your treatment. If the x-ray shows that your fracture is in a good position, a lightweight plaster cast will be applied. This will extend from your knuckles to just below your elbow, but leaving your fingers and thumb free. This cast will remain in place for 3 to 6 weeks.

Depending on your fracture a visit to the clinic the following week may be necessary.

Repeat x-rays would then be taken to ensure your break has remained in a good position for healing. The Doctor will decide when your plaster cast is to be removed. This will be arranged for you at another clinic visit.

If your fracture is not in a good healing position, it may be necessary to reposition the bones whilst you are asleep. This is called an MUA (manipulation under anaesthetic) and is carried out in the operating theatre. This would involve a short stay in hospital. While you are asleep a Plaster of Paris cast will be applied to immobilise your wrist and support it in the correct position for healing.

Sometimes, during the healing process, the position of a break can move slightly. In such cases it may be necessary for the Doctor to operate on the wrist to bring the bones into a better position for healing with the help of screws and plates.

As before, all your follow up treatment will be carried out in the Fracture Clinic. Before you leave the hospital or clinic you will be given a booklet with instructions on how to care for your cast.

This will advise you on how to check your cast for any developing complications.

For example:
• Increased swelling of your hand.
• Tingling or numbness of your fingers.
• Extreme change of temperature.
• An increase in pain & inability to extend your fingers.

Risks:
The majority of Colles Fractures heal well without complications, but some people may not regain full mobility of the wrist as they had before.

You may be left with a mild deformity of the wrist at the end of the healing process.

There is a small risk of nerve and tissue damage following this type of injury.

Sometimes it may be necessary to re-manipulate the break, if x-rays show it has slipped.

For advice please contact Fracture Clinic on
0151 604 7069
Mon – Fri 9am to 4.30pm
or
A&E on the main hospital number outside clinic hours.
0151 678 5111