Wrist Injury Treatment

Self-Care at Home

When you have fallen and injured your wrist, it is important to rest your arm.

- If there is an obvious deformity of the wrist or numbness in the hand, you should lay your wrist across a soft pillow and seek medical attention immediately.
- If there is no obvious deformity and you are not in severe pain, you may want to take some acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) and wait to see how the wrist feels. Again, a soft pillow is a good temporary splint.
- Apply ice to the area. Do not put ice directly on your skin. Wrap a bag of frozen vegetables in a towel to create an icepack.
- If pain or other symptoms do not go away within a day, you should see a doctor.

Medical Treatment

- If there is no fracture seen on the x-ray, the doctor may diagnose a sprain. In cases where there is tenderness in the anatomical snuffbox, the doctor may also suspect there may be a fracture of the scaphoid that is not apparent on the x-rays.
- For a wrist sprain, the doctor may decide to treat you with no splint, a Velcro wrist splint, or plaster splint (like a cast). The decision about a splint will be based on your level of pain, amount of swelling, restriction of movement, and concern about an occult or hidden fracture. (An occult fracture is a fracture that is so small that it does not appear on the initial x-rays.) If the doctor has concerns about an occult fracture, the doctor may splint you and advise you to have repeat x-rays at your doctor's office or with an orthopedist (bone specialist) in 5-10 days.
- For minor sprains, you will likely not be given a splint and told to limit activity appropriate to your level of pain.
- For more severe sprains, you will likely be given a Velcro wrist splint that you can take on and off. Also you might be prescribed some form of pain.
medication. You should make sure that you let the doctor know what other medications you are taking and any allergies that you have.

- Most experts recommend only the use of ice or cold therapy for sprains. Some doctors may still recommend switching to heat therapy after 24-48 hours.
- Treatment of a fracture (a broken bone) depends on the specific type of fracture found. If you have a fracture, you may be treated by the doctor who sees you initially or you may be referred to an orthopedic surgeon.

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- When to Seek Medical Care
- Exams and Tests
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For more information, read the complete article, Wrist Injury

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