

# Exercises After a Wrist Injury

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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*Designed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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## Exercises After a Wrist Injury

- You will likely feel some tightness in your affected wrist if:
  - › You injured your wrist
  - › Your wrist has been in a cast and/or a splint
- You may have 1 or more of these symptoms in your wrist or hand:
  - › Pain and tenderness (often at night)
  - › Swelling
  - › Stiffness
  - › Weakness
  - › Skin changes, like flaking skin, shininess, redness, or blanching (skin turns white)
  - › Changes in sensation (feeling) for a short time
- These symptoms may last for several months as you heal.
- **It is important to keep doing your wrist and hand exercises as you were told, even if you do not have any symptoms.**
- It is important to always stay within a pain level you can handle as you slowly start to use your wrist and hand for your daily activities. This will help to restore (get back) movement, strength, and function in your wrist.

## □ Exercise 23

- Squeeze putty or a soft rubber ball in your affected hand. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Activities that can help

- Try to go back to your usual activities as soon as you can. Some activities can be challenging because you need good muscle control of your wrist and hand.
- **It is important to increase your activity level slowly over time.**
- **The following activities can help with your recovery:**
  - › Washing dishes
  - › Hobbies that use your hands (like knitting, gardening, painting)
  - › Writing and typing on a keyboard
  - › Turning doorknobs
  - › Roll clay or Play-Doh® into tubes or shape it into small balls

## □ Exercise 22

- Hold the end of a long object (like a hammer, mallet, meat tenderizer, or wrench) in your affected hand. Bend the elbow of your affected arm. Keep your elbow at your side. Start with the object in an upright position.



- Move the object slowly like a windshield wiper, so your palm faces down — keep your elbow at your side.
- Bring your hand back to an upright position.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



- Move the object slowly like a windshield wiper, so your palm faces up — keep your elbow at your side.
- Bring your hand back to an upright position.



- Do not lift anything heavy with your affected arm until you are able to move it and it gets stronger.
  - › This usually takes about 4 to 6 weeks after a cast and/or splint is removed.
  - › If you had surgery, this will likely take longer.

### What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

## Exercise schedule:

1. Soak your wrist and hand in warm water for 15 minutes before doing your exercises. This will:
  - > help with pain.
  - > make it easier to move.
  - > help soften flaky skin so you can remove it more easily. You may also use lotion to help soften your skin.

**Note:** If you had surgery to fix a fracture:

- > **Do not** soak your wrist and hand until the skin has fully healed.
- > Your scabs must have fallen off and your incision (cut) must be dry at this point.
- > If your skin is not fully healed yet, use a hot water bottle or a heating pad wrapped in a towel.

2. Do range of motion exercises (see page 5) and stretching exercises (see page 8) to improve your wrist and hand movement.
3. Do strengthening exercises (see page 14) to improve how well your wrist and hand work.
4. Apply ice after exercising. Place an ice pack or a bag of frozen vegetables over your wrist for 10 to 15 minutes.

You can also apply ice throughout the day to help with pain and swelling, as needed.

## □ Exercise 21

- Hold the end of a long object by the handle in your affected hand, with your arm hanging at your side and the head of the object facing backwards.
- Lift the head of the object upward with your wrist. Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds, then lower slowly.
  - > You can move your hand up or down the handle to make this exercise easier or harder.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## □ Exercise 20

- Hold the end of a long object (like a hammer, mallet, meat tenderizer, or wrench) by the handle in your affected hand, with your arm hanging at your side and the head of the object facing forwards.
- Lift the head of the object upward with your wrist. Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds, then lower slowly.
  - › You can move your hand up or down the handle to make this exercise easier or harder.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Swelling

- Your wrist and hand may be swollen. This may last for months.
- The amount of swelling may change throughout the day.
- **To lower swelling:**
  - › Raise your wrist and hand above the level of your heart when resting.
  - › Bend your fingers often, at least 10 times every hour you are awake.
  - › If you have been given a compression stocking, wear it during the day. Take it off at night and when you do your exercises.
  - › Raise your wrist and hand at night by placing pillows under your arm.
  - › Use ice (see previous page).

## Stiffness

- It is common to have stiffness in your wrist and hand.
- Start moving your wrist and hand to get your joints moving more easily.
- You may have discomfort when you first start the exercises. This will get better over time as your wrist and hand become more flexible.

## Range of motion exercises

- Do these exercises 3 times a day.

### ☐ Exercise 1: Flexion

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.
- Bend your wrist down. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 2: Extension

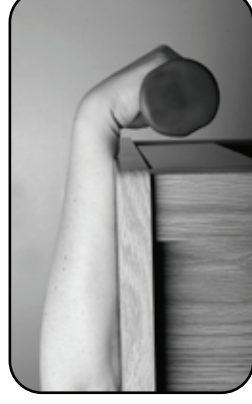
- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.
- Bend your wrist up. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Strengthening exercises

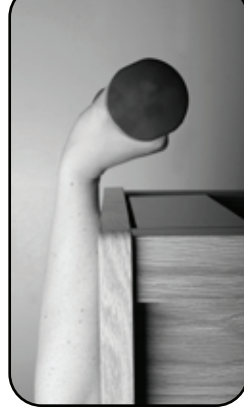
### ☐ Exercise 18

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.
- Hold a small weight or can in your affected hand. Lift your hand up, bending at your wrist. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 19

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm up. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.
- Hold a small weight or can in your affected hand. Lift your hand up, bending at your wrist. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 16: Pronation

- Bend the elbow of your affected arm to 90 degrees. Keep your elbow at your side.
- Place your other hand on your affected wrist.



Turn your palm down as far as you can until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.

- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

### ☐ Exercise 17

- Make a fist with your affected hand.
- Use your other hand to squeeze your fingers tighter. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 3:

#### Radial deviation

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down.
- Move your hand towards your body. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 4: Ulnar deviation

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down.
- Move your hand away from your body. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 16: Pronation

- Bend the elbow of your affected arm to 90 degrees. Keep your elbow at your side.
- Place your other hand on your affected wrist.



Turn your palm down as far as you can until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.

- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

### ☐ Exercise 17

- Make a fist with your affected hand.
- Use your other hand to squeeze your fingers tighter. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



#### Radial deviation

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down.
- Move your hand towards your body. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 4: Ulnar deviation

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down.
- Move your hand away from your body. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



☐ **Exercise 5: Supination and pronation**

- Bend the elbow of your affected arm to 90 degrees. Keep your elbow at your side.
- Turn your palm up as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Turn your palm down as far as you can toward the floor. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



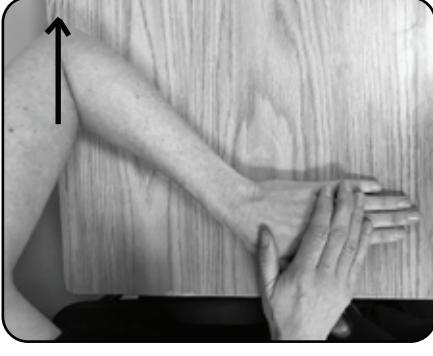
- Bend the fingers of your affected hand to make a fist. Hold for 5 seconds.

- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



☐ **Exercise 14: Ulnar deviation**

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down, with your other hand on top.
- Move your elbow away from your body so that there is movement at your wrist. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



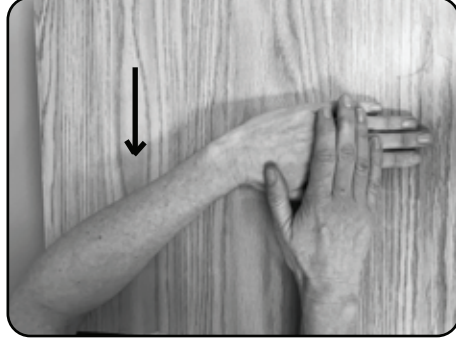
☐ **Exercise 15: Supination**

- Bend the elbow of your affected arm to 90 degrees. Keep your elbow at your side.
- Place your other hand on your affected wrist. Turn your palm up as far as you can until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### Exercise 12: Radial deviation

- Place your affected hand on the table, palm down, with your other hand on top.
- Move the elbow of your affected arm towards your body so that there is movement at your wrist. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### Exercise 13: Ulnar deviation

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down.
- Use your other hand to move your affected hand away from your body until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



## Stretching exercises

- Do these exercises 3 times a day.

### Exercise 6: Flexion

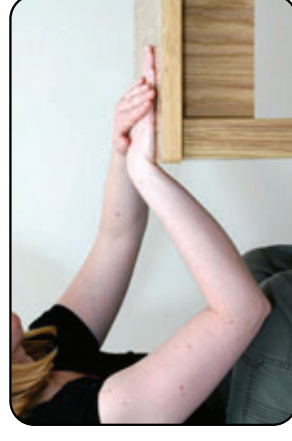
- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.



- Use your other hand to push your affected wrist down over the edge of the table until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

### Exercise 7

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down, with your other hand on top.
- Lower your elbow towards the floor until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 8: Extension

- Place your affected forearm on a table, palm down. Your arm should be placed so that your wrist is over the edge of the table.
- Use your other hand to push your affected wrist up until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 10: Extension

- With your palms together, bring your hands toward your body in a prayer position until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 9

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down, with your other hand on top.
- Lift the elbow of your affected arm slowly off the table until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



### ☐ Exercise 11: Radial deviation

- Place your affected hand on a table, palm down.
- Use your other hand to move your affected hand towards your body until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

