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## Further information

If you require further information about your Colles' fracture, speak to your consultant, GP or physiotherapist.

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This leaflet is for patients who have had their plaster removed.

The purpose of this leaflet is to support the advice given by your physiotherapist/consultant.

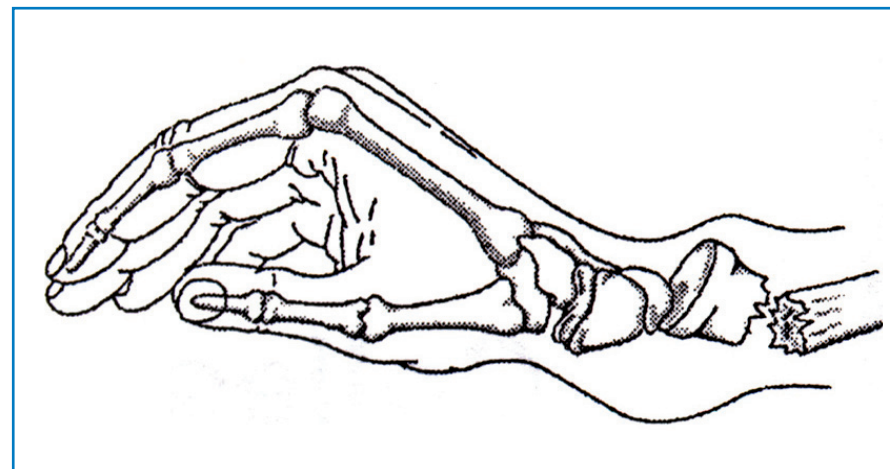
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# Physiotherapy following a Colles' Fracture



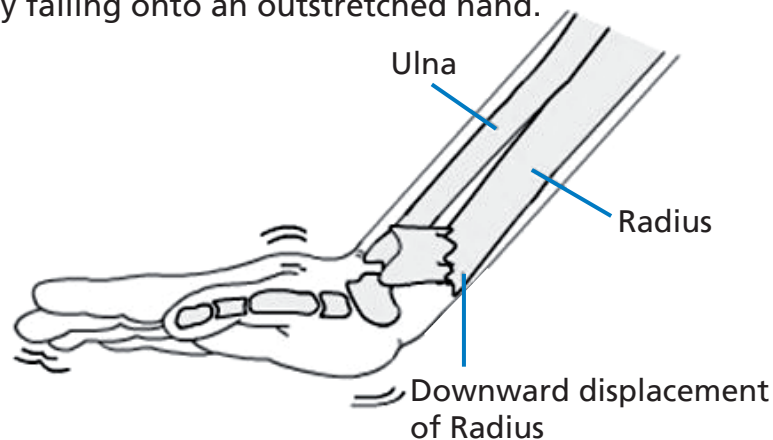
**Patient Information Leaflet  
Physiotherapy Service**

**Authors: Emma Johnson and Felicity Norris**

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## What is a Colles' fracture?

A break in your radius bone close to your wrist. Usually caused by falling onto an outstretched hand.



## How is it treated?

**Plaster of Paris:** your wrist may need to be manipulated into the correct position first. You will usually be in plaster for approximately 4-6 weeks.

**Surgery:** the ends of the bone are held in place with pins and plates.

### Whilst the plaster is on...

It is important to keep your shoulder, elbow, and fingers moving.

### After removal of the plaster

Your wrist will feel vulnerable once out of plaster because it hasn't been moved for a long time. It is normal to feel like this. Things that need addressing after removal of the plaster are: swelling, pain, strength and stiffness.

## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

### For how long will I experience swelling and/or discomfort in my hand/wrist?

Expect swelling/discomfort for up to one year post fracture. This is normal and does not mean there is anything to worry about.

### Why does my wrist look a funny shape?

As a fracture heals new bone is formed which will join the broken ends together. This can result in a lump forming on the back/side of your wrist. This is normal and will take place over 12-18 months.

### When can I start driving?

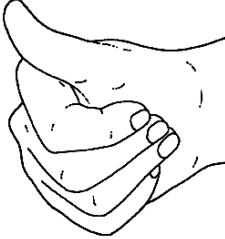
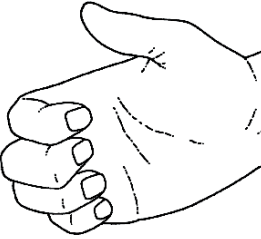

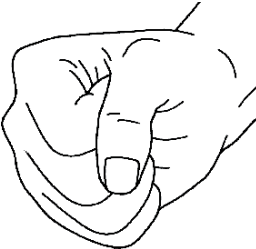
When you have sufficient movement and strength to be able to grip the steering wheel, change gear and control the car safely. This will vary between individuals but is approximately six to eight weeks after removal of plaster. Please make sure that you speak to your insurance company.

### Should I stop the exercises if my wrist swells or aches?

It is normal to expect some increase in swelling or soreness when doing the exercises. Use your pain medication if necessary to enable you to perform the exercises.

### Is there anything else I could do to increase the function in my wrist/hand?

Day-to-day activities such as wringing out dishcloths, unscrewing jars and manual dexterity tasks such as writing are really helpful in getting your wrist/hand to work at previous levels.

	<p>Wrist and fingers straight. Make a fist keeping your finger tips straight.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Wrist and fingers straight. Hook your fingers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>With your thumb touch each finger-tip.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Make a fist.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p> <p>(Alternatively try holding onto a sponge and squeezing as much as possible).</p>

## What should I expect when my plaster is taken off, and what can I do?

### Pain or discomfort

It is normal to get some pain after your fracture. If you have been given pain killers you should take them as prescribed, this will allow you to do your exercises and use your hand more. Always check instructions or ask your pharmacist or GP about over the counter pain killers. However, **if your pain is severe or continuous you should contact your GP.**

### Swelling

Swelling can reduce your ability to use your hand and inhibit movement. Remove any rings and avoid wearing a tight watch. Try the following to minimise swelling:

- Keep your hand elevated (above the level of the heart). Rest your hand on the opposite shoulder whenever you are not using it.
- Pump your hand regularly throughout the day (ideally every hour). Raise and lower your arm whilst clenching and relaxing the fist several times.
- At night rest your hand on some pillows so that it lies above your heart.

### Stiffness

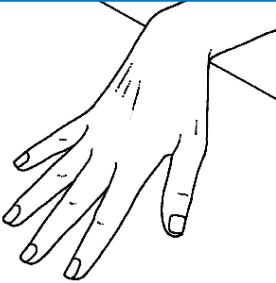
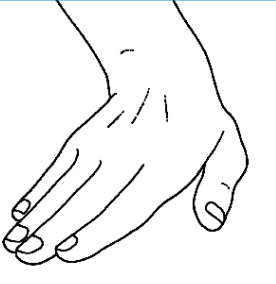
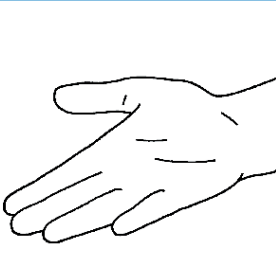
It is important to try and get as much movement as possible in your hand and wrist after the fracture has healed. Exercising and using your hand will help to reduce stiffness. Heat (i.e. hot water bottle/warm water) can be useful, but **do not** do this if your wrist is swollen.

### Strength

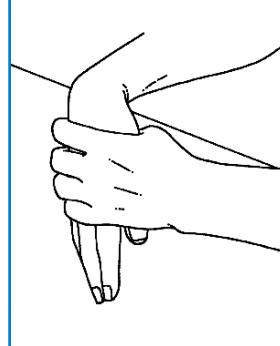

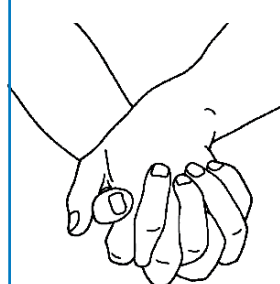
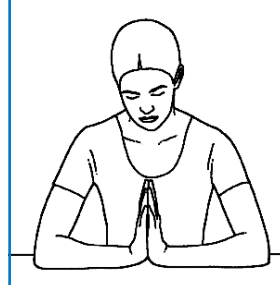
You will have reduced strength in your hand and wrist because it hasn't been used while in the plaster. When the plaster is removed, only use your hand for light activities. You should gradually increase how much you use your hand/wrist and be guided by your pain. **Don't** carry any heavy pots/pans, kettle as you are at risk of dropping them.

**Exercises - These exercises are designed to improve movement and function in your hand and wrist; they should be carried out four or five times a day.**

**Please note: Exercise, like medication, requires a specific dose; not enough will be of no benefit, too much may do harm. Only exercise to a comfortable level. Mild discomfort during exercise is acceptable and is normal as long as it settles throughout the day.**

	<p>Support your forearm on a table as shown.</p> <p>Bend your wrist up and down.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Hold fingers and wrist straight.</p> <p>Bend your wrist first towards the little finger and then towards the thumb.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Alternately turn palm up and down keeping the elbow still.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>

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	<p>Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge, palm facing down.</p> <p>Let your hand down, gently assist the movement with your other hand. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Clasp your hands together.</p> <p>Bend your wrist up and down.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Clasp your hands together.</p> <p>Alternately turn palms up and down keeping elbows still.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>
	<p>Sit or stand. Forearms horizontally in front of you and palms together.</p> <p>Push palms together for 5 seconds. Relax.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Repeat 10 times</p>