

WRIST SPRAINS

This information is for patients who have been told by a medical professional that they have a sprained wrist and not any other form of wrist injury.

A wrist sprain occurs when there is injury to one or more of the wrist ligaments. The ligaments provide wrist support and stability; holding the wrist joint in place. When any of these structures are injured, there is immediate pain and swelling and consequently the stability and thus function of the wrist joint is affected. The degree of instability and loss of function is dependent upon on the severity of wrist ligament injury; some wrist sprains are more severe than others.

Wrist sprains are commonly caused by a fall onto an outstretched hand. The sudden impact of forces on the wrist causes the wrist ligaments to stretch and or possibly tear resulting in pain and swelling. Severe pain and swelling can limit wrist function (movement), coordination and balance (proprioception).

Once diagnosed with a wrist sprain, rehabilitation can begin immediately. The aim of treatment is to control the pain, reduce the swelling and introduce wrist exercises to encourage ligament healing and thus restoration of normal function. Depending upon the severity of the wrist sprain, it can take up to several weeks for it to settle down.

TREATMENT

In the first 24-48 hours, the **RICE** protocol is followed

Rest – rest the wrist

Ice – ice the wrist

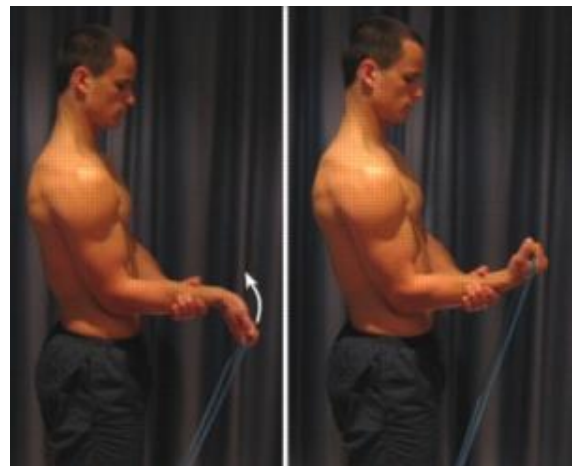
Compression – elastic bandage/ wrist splint. Keep the bandage on during the day and take it off whilst sleeping at night.

Elevation – whenever you are sitting try and rest the wrist above the heart.

As soon as it is comfortable gentle wrist exercises should be encouraged. Early wrist exercises will encourage wrist function and proprioception recovery and thus facilitate ligament healing.

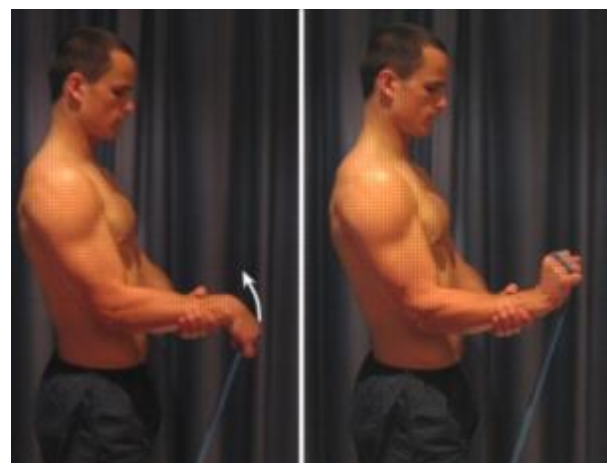
Exercise 1 - wrist flexion

Face your palm upwards and with the support from your other hand slowly curl your fingers and wrist towards you. Hold for 3 seconds and slowly return. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Resistance can be increased by using a resistance band



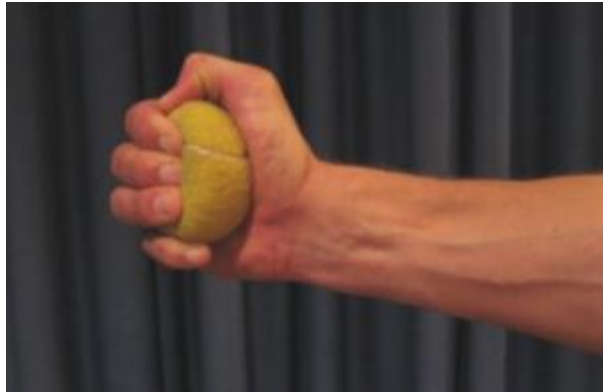
Exercise 2 – wrist extension

Face your palm downwards and with the support from your other hand slowly extend your wrist upwards. Hold for 3 seconds and slowly return. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Resistance can be increased by using a resistance band



Exercise 3 – grip strength

Squeeze a tennis ball hard as possible and hold for 5 seconds and then repeat 10 times.



If the pain and swelling does not begin to settle or you are unable to perform the above exercises. You may have a more serious wrist sprain and may need a more intensive rehabilitation program. Such things may include a greater rest period with potential temporary plaster cast immobilisation or physiotherapy. All of which can be assessed and organised by your GP.