

## Colles fracture

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### What is a Colles fracture?

A Colles fracture is a break of one of the forearm bones (the radius) near the wrist joint. It is the most common of all fractures and is often the result of a fall onto an outstretched hand.

### How is it treated?

The fracture is usually supported in a plaster of Paris cast for about six weeks. Following a Colles fracture there are normally some changes to the shape of your wrist. However, this does not necessarily affect the movements of your wrist in the long term. Sometimes your consultant may refer you to physiotherapy to help get the wrist moving again.

### What can I do to help myself?

- Maintain movement in the neck, shoulder, elbow and fingers by using the exercises in this leaflet (stage 1). These should be done both whilst the wrist is in the plaster and after it is removed.
- It is normal for your wrist to be stiff and painful once the plaster is removed. **There are additional exercises for this; listed at the end of this leaflet to be started as soon as possible, once the plaster is removed** (stage 2).
- Once you are safely able to do so, use the hand and arm as normally as possible during your everyday life.

### Will medication help?

It is important that any pain is well-controlled after the plaster comes off so that you are able to exercise your wrist effectively. Should you need advice about this, please discuss with your GP.

## Exercises

### Exercises whilst in your plaster (stage 1):

Sit or stand.

Lift your arm up as high as you can letting the thumb lead the way.

Repeat 10 times.



Stand.

Bend your elbow and straighten your elbow as far as you can.

Repeat 10 times.



Open and close your fingers to make a fist, stretching as far as you can and making sure you include your thumb.

Repeat 10 times.



**Finally, when resting, try and spend some time with your forearm and hand elevated to reduce possible swelling – by using some pillows, for example.**

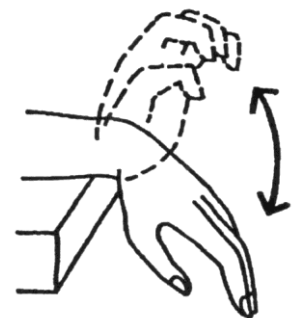
### Exercises once your plaster is removed (Stage 2):

Continue with previous exercises and add the following:

Sit with your forearm supported on a table.

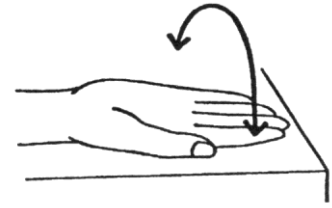
Bend your wrist up and down as far as you can.

Repeat 10 times.



Forearm on a table, or elbow by your side.

Turn your palm over to face the ceiling as far as you can. Then turn down towards the floor as far as you can. Make sure you keep your elbow still throughout both.



Repeat 10 times.

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Forearm supported on a table with your hand over the edge and palm facing down.

Hold just below your wrist joint. Bend the wrist, then using the heel of your other hand, add pressure to increase the downward movement of your wrist. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds.



Repeat 10 times.

(This exercise should then be repeated as above in the opposite (upwards) direction.)

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Sit or stand, forearms horizontally in front of you and palms together.

Push palms together for five seconds. Relax.

Repeat 10 times.



## Remember

- Exercises should be done gently and slowly, and increased gradually. Try to work up to 10 reps and do this 3 times a day.
- To get the most benefit, keep doing the exercises, little and often.
- Feeling pain and stiffness is normal. In fact, when you first begin to move your wrist and hand after being in plaster, the pain may be temporarily increased.
- If over time the pain and swelling continue to worsen, contact your doctor or the Physiotherapy Department (if you have been referred) for advice.
- It is normal for it to take several months for your wrist to regain normal movement and function following a Colles fracture.

## Further information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Physiotherapy Department at North Devon District Hospital on **01271 322378**.

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## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## **Have your say**

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust  
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple  
Devon EX31 4JB  
Tel. 01271 322577  
[www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk)

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