

Pre/Post-Operative Information – Distal Radial Fracture

What to expect during surgery:

Operative treatment of distal radius fractures is generally performed on an outpatient basis. Dr. Holt will meet you on the day of surgery and review the plan. Anesthesia options include general or light sedation in combination with a regional nerve block. You will be taken to an operating room where your wrist will be cleaned and draped. An incision approximately 3 – 4 inches in length will be made over the palm side of your wrist. The fracture will be reduced to line up the fragments as normally as possible and then a metal plate and screws will be placed to hold the fracture in place. The incision will be closed with stitches a wrist splint will be placed to protect the wrist during the early healing period.

Pain Control:

Start with simple, but effective pain relief strategies such as ice and elevation. Especially for the first 2 - 3 days, attempt to keep your hand above your heart as much as possible. This will significantly limit pain and swelling. Next, try over the counter pain medications such as Tylenol and/or ibuprofen. Most patients tolerate these medications well. Take them food, and make sure to check your allergies and/or other medications and medical issues to ensure it is safe to take them. Most patients use a small amount of narcotic medication after surgery which will be provided to you on the day of surgery as needed. Take them as directed and only as needed.

Dressing/Bandage:

Keep your dressing on until you return for follow up. Use a plastic bag or cover to keep it dry during showers/hygiene.

Activity:

You may use your hands immediately for light activities of daily living such as feeding yourself, dressing, and using a phone and/or computer. You should avoid lifting/pushing/pulling more than 1 pound and/or the use of power tools and highly repetitive activities until you return for follow up. Additionally, work on the attached finger range of motion exercises multiple times per day. **It is very important to begin moving your fingers right after surgery and keep them moving to avoid stiffness.**

Additional Information:

After surgery, you should expect some pain, swelling, and stiffness. Dr. Holt will talk to you about when it is safe to return to work. Most patients can return to light work (computer/desk work) within a few days, but it may take 3 months or longer to return to more demanding work (labor, construction, etc.). Distal radius fractures generally heal around 3 months. However, even once the fracture has healed many patients will still have some stiffness/weakness/mild pain that may continue to improve for 9 – 12 months. Depending on your progress, Dr. Holt may recommend therapy. Most patient will be placed in a removable brace at their two week follow up appointment which can be removed for hygiene and gentle wrist range of motion.

Follow-Up:

Your follow up appointment is generally 10 – 14 days after your surgery and should be in your discharge packet on the day of surgery. Call us if you have any questions at (541) 382-3344.



1. Straighten Fingers



2. Knuckle Bend w/
Straight Fingers



3. Karate Chop
(90/90 position)



4. Closed Fist



5. Open & Closed Fingers



5. Thumb to Finger Touch
Finish at Palm Crease