

# Discharge Information: Hand and finger fractures

This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your care after discharge.

You or your family member has been diagnosed with a fracture of a bone(s) in the finger or hand.

Uncomplicated hand (metacarpal) and finger fractures are often treated with simple strapping; however more complicated fractures may require correction under anaesthetic. If your treating practitioner is concerned you will be referred to the Orthopaedic specialists for ongoing treatment.

## Initial Treatment

Simple fractures are managed with simple strapping, however more complicated injuries may be splinted in a cast prior to review by the Orthopaedic specialists.

Once supported with strapping and a sling, simple pain killers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen often provide adequate pain relief for these injuries; however your individual requirements will be assessed by your treating practitioner.

Rest the injured arm in a high arm sling for the first 24-48 hours.

## Follow Up Treatment

If you are not referred to an Orthopaedic specialist you will be referred either back to your General Practitioner or to the Emergency Department.

You should be seen 1 week after the injury and again 3 weeks after the injury to assess healing.

After 3 weeks the strapping is usually removed and exercises and use of the injured finger is encouraged.

Sporting activities will need to be restricted for a further 6 weeks.

If you are a Female over 45 years of age or a Male over 55 years of age and your fracture is the result of a fall from a standing height, this may indicate that you have a higher risk of osteoporosis, a disease in which the bones become fragile and brittle. If your treating practitioner has not discussed further investigations about osteoporosis, we advise that you arrange to see your general practitioner to discuss this further.

## Plaster and Synthetic Cast Care

### Initial Cast Care

If a cast or plaster splint has been applied you must do the following for the first 24 hours:

- Rest the arm in a sling
- Keep it elevated (eg. Sleep with your arm on a pillow)
- > Check your hand for any of the following:
  - Increasing pain
  - Increasing swelling
  - Numbness or tingling
  - Change in skin colour
  - Change in skin temperature

If you experience any of the above signs or symptoms please phone or return to the Emergency Department for review.

- Keep moving the fingers
- If you have a full cast, come back the following day to have your cast checked

### Ongoing Cast Care

#### Do:

- Keep the cast dry
- Check daily for cracks, breaks or soft areas
- Exercise joints not affected
- Be aware of a loose cast when the swelling subsides; replacement may be necessary
- If in doubt seek advice.

#### Don't:

- Get the cast wet
- Get the cast near anything hot. The cast material retains heat and may cause a burn
- Poke objects inside your cast
- Alter or cut your cast in any way
- Carry heavy objects or lean on your cast

## Contact Numbers

Noarlunga Hospital  
Emergency Department  
08 8384 9288

Flinders Medical Centre  
Emergency Department  
08 8204 6065

Orthopaedic Clinic  
08 8204 4787

## Private Orthopaedic Surgeon

Name: .....

Your next review is: .....

Address: .....

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Contact number: .....

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Appointment Date: .....

If a referral has been sent to the Orthopaedic Clinic and you do not receive an appointment time within 5 days you will need to call them on the number listed above.

Appointment Time: .....

## For more information

Emergency Department  
Flinders Medical Centre  
Flinders Drive  
Bedford Park SA 5042

Emergency Department  
Noarlunga Hospital  
Alexander Kelly Drive  
Noarlunga Centre SA 5168

Telephone: 08 8204 5042  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.



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