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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Hand Injury Advice

You have been diagnosed with soft tissue injury to your hand. The following advice should help you to recover.

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest for the first 24/48 hours after your injury using your hand as little as possible but moving it gently for 10 to 20 seconds every hour when you're awake. • Keep your hand raised (elevated) higher than your heart to help prevent/reduce any swelling- use a sling if you've been given one. • To reduce swelling use ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for about 20 minutes every 2-3 hours if you can. • If your hand is bandaged exercise any free parts of your hand, otherwise the hand will become stiff. <p>Take the recommended medication to relieve the pain regularly– see page 4. If the pain gets progressively worse see your GP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ice packs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ over areas of skin that are in poor condition ○ if you have poor sensation to cold ○ if you know you have poor circulation. • Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn. • Do not leave ice on while asleep. • Wear any rings on your hand until it is completely better. • Miss any appointments you may have been given.

Why do I need to exercise my hand after an injury?

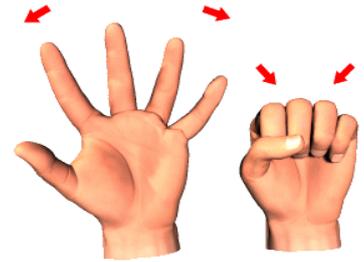
After 48hours try to use your hand as much as the pain allows, especially for simple things e.g. eating/dressing. Exercise really helps your hand, so do whatever you normally would. Steadily build up the daily use of your hand - as each day goes by, you should be able to move your hand/fingers more freely and with less soreness. It may be some weeks before full-strength returns.

Begin the flexibility exercises (see below) as soon as you can - they may cause discomfort but this shouldn't be severe or last very long - try to do them 3-4 times a day especially after you have taken pain relief and used ice (this reduces pain and makes movement around the injury more comfortable). They are designed to prevent your hand becoming stiff, strengthen your muscles, and so improve the range of movement and function of your hand. The repetitions and sets are a guideline. When doing exercise you should listen to your pain levels, especially in the early stages. You may find that these exercises increase your symptoms slightly in the beginning. However, they should get easier over time.

Exercise 1: Make a fist

Make a gentle fist, wrapping your thumb across your fingers. Gently uncurl them until they are straight again. Release and spread your fingers wide.

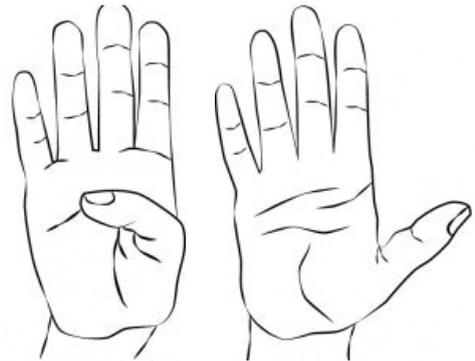
Repeat these 10 times and 3-4 times a day.



Exercise 2

With your hand facing upwards, stretch your thumb across towards the base of the little finger. Then stretch out to the side as far as possible.

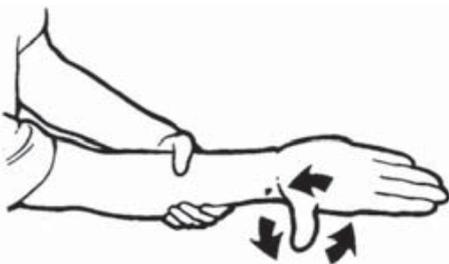
Repeat these 10 times and 3-4 times a day



Exercise 3

Continue moving the thumb around in circles, stretching as far as possible.

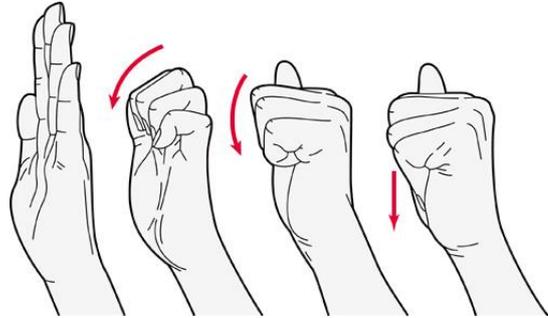
Repeat these 10 times and 3-4 times a day



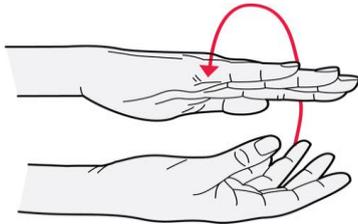
**If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant
Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287
Or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):
Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056 Nevil Hall Hospital: 01873 732073
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353
Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318**

Exercise 4:

With your hand facing away from you, gradually curl your fingers inwards. Start at the top joints of your fingers, then the middle ones and then finally curl in the knuckles. Hold for a few seconds. Slowly straighten out the fingers. Start at the knuckles, then the middle joints followed by the top joints of your fingers. Repeat these 10 times and 3-4 times a day.



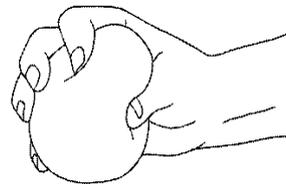
Exercise 5:



Start with your palm facing upwards. Then slowly turn your hand over so your hand is facing down. Turn it slowly back over to face upwards. Repeat these 10 times and 3-4 times a day.

Exercise 6:

Gently squeeze a soft ball for 2-3 minutes



What do I take for pain?

No pain relief may be needed if the sprain is mild. However, painkillers such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then. They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol. If Paracetamol doesn't help at all despite taking the recommended dose, then try changing to Ibuprofen 400 mg three times a day. You can also take both drugs – speak to a pharmacist about the best way to do this. If you have been advised not to take Ibuprofen in the past or are on any blood thinning tablets then avoid Ibuprofen.
With all the medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers, such as Ibuprofen can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you shouldn't use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with the gel, however, the amount of the drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.

If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP, or self-refer to your local physiotherapy department or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.

Physio self-referral link:

[Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Physiotherapy Service \(wales.nhs.uk\)](https://wales.nhs.uk)



If you are unable to do this electronically you should call 0300 3732539 between 8.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

References:

Exercises for wrist, hand and finger problems | NHS inform

Exercises for the fingers, hands and wrists | Versus Arthritis

**This document is available in Welsh/
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**