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Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Scaphoid Injury Advice

The scaphoid bone is one of eight small wrist bones which fit between the forearm and hand bones, and which allow the complicated, yet delicate movements of the wrist. The scaphoid sits below the thumb and is shaped a bit like a kidney bean. A fall on the outstretched hand puts heavy stress on this bone, which can cause either a small crack through the middle of the bone or a complete break into two pieces.

The blood supply to the scaphoid presents a problem at times following a fracture. If the fracture tears the artery supplying blood to the bone, the blood supply is cut stopping the bone getting the oxygen and the healing nutrients it needs. When this happens healing can be slow (delayed union) or it may not happen at all (non-union). Sometimes this poor blood supply following a fracture leads to a condition where part of the bone dies. This is called Avascular necrosis (AN). AN becomes easy to see on X-rays several months after the injury. This is why we treat possible scaphoid fractures by putting your wrist in a splint or a cast and an elevation sling.

Treatment

Not all Scaphoid fractures are picked up on the initial X-ray. So, you will probably have been told that there was no evidence of fracture on your x-ray and that you need to return for an Emergency Department Review Clinic appointment in about 10-14 days. **It is important that you keep this so that we can continue to treat you and prevent possible problems in future.** At this appointment you will be re-examined by a senior doctor/ Nurse Consultant who will decide what further investigations of your wrist, if any, are needed. They should also be able to give you an idea of how long your injury will take to heal.

**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 (RGH) MIU: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital (NHH) MIU: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YF) MIU 01443 802353

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

If advised by the doctor/nurse that you have completed your investigations or treatment, you may be told that physiotherapy is required. The physiotherapy service operates a self-referral process and so you will need to arrange your own appointment via:

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Physiotherapy Service (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.

Things to remember:	Things you need to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have been given a splint It is important that you wear it all the time • If your injury occurred in the last 2 days and your wrist is swollen it is important to keep it elevated – that means higher than your heart –to reduce any swelling • You should exercise all the parts not in the splint/ plaster cast, to stop them becoming stiff. • Take the recommended medication to relieve the pain – this can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your wrist becoming more painful • Tingling in your fingers • Your fingers becoming pale/blue or very cold <p>If you do have any of these symptoms and:</p> <p>Your wrist is in a plaster - Elevate your arm for 30 mins</p> <p>If your wrist is in a splint - Loosen it a little and then elevate your arm for 30mins</p> <p>If this does not improve things then you should return to the ED/MIU where you were seen straight away.</p>

What should I take for Pain?

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. 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.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers (like Ibuprofen) : 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

<p>If you have been advised not to take Ibuprofen in the past or are on any blood thinning tablets then avoid Ibuprofen.</p> <p>With all medication, it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.</p>	<p>them either.</p> <p>You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with gel, however, the amount of drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.</p>
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If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not been contacted within 10 days, we advise you to contact the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.

Reference:

Scaphoid Fracture (Wrist Fracture) Patient info: Symptoms and Treatment

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