



**GIG**  
CYMRU  
**NHS**  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Aneurin Bevan  
University Health Board

# Wrist Injury Advice

Following injury, your wrist may be swollen, bruised and painful due to the damage to the soft tissues such as ligaments, tendons, muscles, etc.

You can also have wrist pain from repetitive use that results in an inflammation of the tendons (tendonitis). This is termed a repetitive strain injury and is not a true sprain. However, the symptoms can be similar, so to help the natural healing process, please follow the advice below.

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest for the first 24/48 hours after your injury using your wrist as little as possible but moving your wrist gently.</li> <li>• To help prevent/reduce the swelling keep your wrist raised (elevated) in a sling or on pillows - ideally with your wrist above the level of your heart.</li> <li>• Use ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for about 20 minutes every 2-3 hours if you can</li> <li>• Take the recommended medication to relieve the pain (see page 3) This can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Follow the instructions on the packet/bottle carefully</li> <li>• If you have been given a splint, this should be removed when resting and at night.</li> <li>• Keep your shoulder and elbow moving normally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use ice packs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ over areas of skin that are in poor condition</li> <li>○ if you have poor sensation to cold</li> <li>○ if you know you have poor circulation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn.</li> <li>• Don't leave ice on while asleep.</li> <li>• Don't use ice for more than 20 minutes at a time - you won't be helping heal the sprained wrist any faster, and you can cause damage to the tissue</li> </ul>

**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**

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

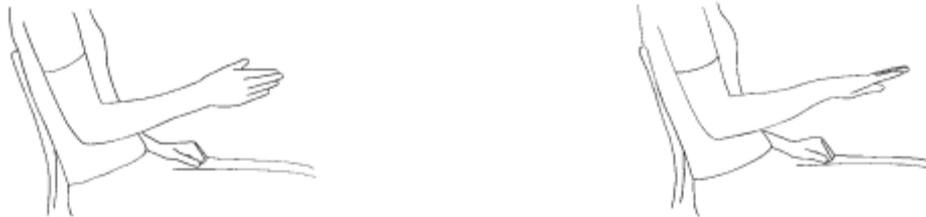
After 48 hours try to use your hand as much as the pain allows, especially for simple things e.g., eating/dressing. Exercise really helps your hand, so do whatever you normally would. Stay at or return to work - this is important and is the best way to get better. Steadily build up the daily use of your 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 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 wrist/hand becoming stiff, strengthen your muscles, and so improve the range of movement and function of your wrist. All these things are important to prevent further re-injury. The repetitions and sets are a guideline.

1. Sit at a table with your forearm and hand resting on its side on the tabletop. Bend your wrist forward and then backwards alternatively x10



2. Bend your elbow to a 90-degree angle turn palm up then turn palm down x10



3. Perform a circle movement with wrist, relaxing the fingers x10



4. Start by making a fist. Open the hand by fully straightening and spreading the fingers x10



As each day goes by, you should be able to move the wrist more freely and with less soreness, until the movement should eventually be the same as that on your unaffected side. Start returning to light activities, steadily building up the daily use and progressing to more demanding activities. It may be some weeks before full-strength returns.

Depending on how badly your wrist is sprained, it may take between 4 - 8 weeks to recover, sometimes longer.

### Pain relief

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.

**With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.**

**Anti-inflammatory painkillers** 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 so it is important that you use enough gel.

You can gradually return to sport. Do it slowly and listen to how your wrist feels. Build it up steadily.

**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:**

Sprains and strains | Health topics A to Z | CKS | NICE

Sprains and strains - NHS

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