Broken Hand: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

A hand can break (fracture) during sports, a fall, or other accidents. The break may happen when your hand twists, is hit, or is used to protect you in a fall. Fractures can range from a small, hairline crack, to a bone or bones broken into two or more pieces. Your treatment depends on how bad the break is.

Your doctor may have put your hand in a brace, splint, or cast to allow it to heal or to keep it stable until you see another doctor. It may take weeks or months for your hand to heal. You can help it heal with some care at home.

You heal best when you take good care of yourself. Eat a variety of healthy foods, and don't smoke.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Put ice or a cold pack on your hand for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake). Put a thin cloth between the ice and your cast or splint. Keep your cast or splint dry.
- Follow the cast care instructions your doctor gives you. If you have a splint, do not take it off unless your doctor tells you to.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Prop up your hand on pillows when you sit or lie down in the first few days after the injury. Keep your hand higher than the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Follow instructions for exercises to keep your arm strong.
- Wiggle your uninjured fingers often to reduce swelling and stiffness, but do not use that hand to grasp or carry anything.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse pain.
- Your hand or fingers are cool or pale or change color.
- Your cast or splint feels too tight.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your hand or fingers.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

- You have problems with your cast or splint.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **Q241** in the search box to learn more about **"Broken Hand: Care Instructions".**

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