Scaphoid Fracture of the Wrist: Care Instructions

Overview

A scaphoid fracture (also called a navicular fracture) is a break in a small bone on the thumb side of your wrist. It can cause pain and swelling in the wrist and make it hard to move your wrist.

You may have broken this bone by putting your hand out to break a fall.

Treatment for this type of break includes wearing an arm cast or splint and sometimes having surgery. The type of treatment depends on how bad the break is.

Even if the first X-rays don't show a break, there may be one. If your doctor thinks a break is possible, it will be treated. It is better to do this than risk not treating a fracture and possibly delay healing. If the doctor treats the break, you may be asked to come back in 1 to 2 weeks for another X-ray. Or the doctor may order another test such as an MRI.

It is important to follow the doctor's instructions because parts of the scaphoid bone do not have a good blood supply. This can make healing slow and difficult.

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

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

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?

- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
    - 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 wrist on pillows when you sit or lie down in the first few days after the injury. Keep your wrist higher than the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your wrist 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) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Follow your doctor's directions for wearing a splint or cast.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have problems with your cast or splint. For example:
    - The skin under the cast or splint is burning or stinging.

    - The cast or splint feels too tight.
    - There is a lot of swelling near the cast or splint. (Some swelling is normal.)
    - You have a new fever.
    - There is drainage or a bad smell coming from the cast or splint.
- You have severe or increasing pain.
- Your fingers turn cold or change color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your hand and fingers.

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

- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

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

Enter **W776** in the search box to learn more about **"Scaphoid Fracture of the Wrist: Care Instructions".**

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