NHS
Royal Cornwall Hospitals
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Suspected scaphoid injury

Information for patients aged 41 - 59 years

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About this leaflet

This leaflet is for patients aged 41-59 years old who have an injury at the site of their scaphoid wrist bone. It aims to answer any questions you may have and explains possible treatment options. Because the chance of a fracture changes with age, it is important that you have the right leaflet for your age group.

You should also get a 'Following your wrist sprain' leaflet (RCHT 2048).

What is a scaphoid injury?

The scaphoid is a bone in your wrist that is just below the base of your thumb. It is the most commonly fractured carpal bone and makes up for 15% of wrist injuries, but these become less common as we get older.

Scaphoid fractures often don't show up well (or at all) on X-rays. However, the chances of a missed fracture becomes less likely after the age of 40 years, and is rare after 60 years.

Will I need treatment?

Your X-rays did not show a fracture but as your scaphoid bone is sore, we are taking a cautious approach.

If scaphoid fractures are left untreated it can lead to poor healing of the bone, osteoarthritis of the joint, reduced range of movement and decreased grip strength. Therefore, we are treating you in a wrist splint.

- Rest your wrist in the splint provided for at least 2 weeks.
- If the pain is settling, then gradually remove the splint for longer periods but avoid any manual duties or lifting until 4-6 weeks after your injury and when it is comfortable.
- If your pain is not settling by 2 weeks after your injury, we would like to do more imaging:
    - please call the Hand Clinic Administrator on 01736 758892 between Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.
    - They will organise for you to have a scan on your wrist and to be contacted about the results by telephone.

- Keep wearing the wrist splint until your pain is settling or you have had the results of your scan (see overleaf).
- If you do not hear about the result within 72 hours of having your scan, please call the Hand Clinic Administrator on the above number and they will organise it for you.

If you live outside Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, with a suspected scaphoid fracture:

- Please ensure that your doctor or practitioner knows this and your X-ray images will be sent to your local hospital.
- Your clinical notes from your visit today will be given to you for you to arrange your own follow up. Your doctor or practitioner will explain what is required.
- You will be placed into a wrist splint – advice is to rest, ice, elevate and take regular painkillers.

Treatment following scan results

If you have a confirmed scaphoid tubercle fracture:

- The tubercle is the very tip of the bone and usually heals satisfactorily without surgery.
- This injury is managed by resting your wrist in a splint at home.
- Wean out of your wrist splint after 4 weeks and avoid heavy lifting, manual duties or contact sports until at least 6 weeks after your injury.
- Seek GP follow up if there is no significant improvement in your symptoms within 4 weeks. Your GP can refer you for physiotherapy or to the Hand Clinic for a further review.

If you have any other confirmed scaphoid fracture:

- The Hand Clinic will contact you and ask you to attend the Plaster Room at Royal Cornwall Hospital Treliske or a local fracture clinic. You will be placed in a plaster cast and sling to immobilise the fracture.
- Follow up will be arranged with the Hand Clinic or Fracture Clinic.

Continued overleaf

If no fracture is identified on your CT or MRI scan:

- You will be treated as for a wrist sprain.
- Please refer back to the Wrist Sprain advice sheet for treatment and advice.

Caring for your wrist splint

- At first, use the splint throughout the day and night.
- Remove your splint at least twice a day to wash your skin gently with a wet cloth. Pat dry with a towel and replace the splint before continuing with your duties.
- Your wrist splint should fit comfortably on your wrist, do not tighten the wrist brace too much as it may cause too much pressure around the wrist.
- Check for:
    - any signs of wear or damage to the wrist brace and velcro straps
    - breaks in the skin or blisters caused by the wrist brace
    - redness, soreness or swelling of the skin around your wrist
    - increased pain whilst wearing your brace
    - changes in colour of your wrist or fingers.

Any questions?

If you have any concerns or queries then please contact the Emergency department or Urgent Treatment Centre you were assessed at, contact a Minor Injury Unit or call 111.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

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