

Scaphoid Fracture

What has happened?

You have broken, or fractured, your scaphoid. The scaphoid is a bone at the base of the thumb. This type of injury is painful and the time to healing can take anywhere from a few weeks to around 4-5 months. Once healed many fractures can continue to be symptomatic. Most scaphoid fractures are stable (the bone moves in one piece) and can be treated in a plaster cast. The time in cast depends on the location of the fracture in the scaphoid. Some unstable fractures require an operation.

What should I expect during recovery?

Weeks 1-2

The fracture will be painful, but this pain is tolerable in the cast. There may be considerable swelling and bruising from the fingers down into the wrist.

You should continue moving your fingers, elbow and shoulder to avoid stiffness. Start the hand KEY EXERCISES

Weeks 3-6

The pain and bruising will gradually subside. Use your arm for simple tasks as pain allows.

Week 7-12

The cast will be removed. You should begin the wrist KEY EXERCISES as soon as you are comfortable. Start to use your hand normally as soon as possible. This is quite safe, as the fracture has largely healed and most discomfort is from stiffness in the joint.

Are there any complications of this injury?

It often takes up to a year for the wrist to feel normal again. Most scaphoids heal without complication. 10-15%, however, will not heal (**non-union**). In those cases that are symptomatic, surgery may be recommended. A small piece of bone is taken from the pelvis and inserted between the un-united bone. This is held with a small bone screw.

Smoking has a strong association with non-union.

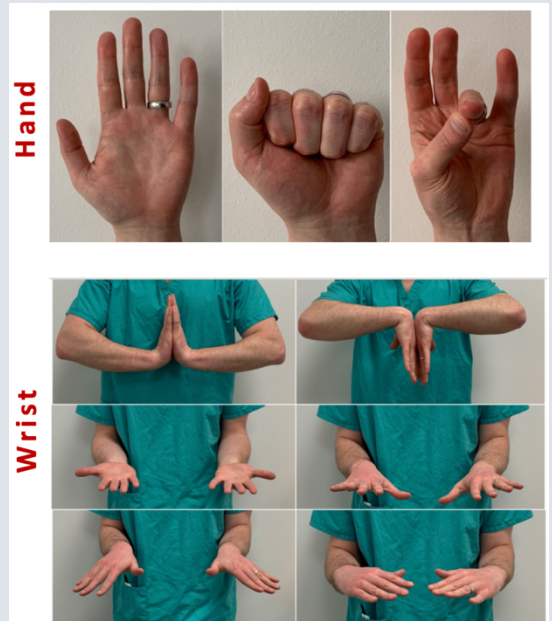
Some patients develop arthritis later in life. This is more significant if a non-union occurs. If this is painful, then surgery may be offered to try and alleviate pain, although generally this type of surgery sacrifices movement for pain relief.

What does the Xray look like?

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KEY EXERCISES



Checklist

- Week 2 - I can make a full fist
- Week 8 - I can use my hand for everyday activity
- Week 12- I have returned to work

TOP TIPS

- Stop smoking! This will help healing.**
- Take vitamin C**
- Try to keep moving your fingers**

Contact the Fife Virtual Hand Clinic Team

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