

Exercises of your arm & hand while in a cast

Your wrist has been put in a cast to stop it from moving so the bones can heal properly. Because of your injury, your arm might swell, your wrist joints might become stiff and your muscles might become weak.

This page explains how you can minimise the effects of your injury. You should gradually feel less pain and discomfort.

If either:

- your pain, swelling, or stiffness gets much worse
- your cast is too painful or seems too tight or too loose

contact:

The Orthopaedic Outpatients Department, Christchurch Hospital, on (03) 364-0800 ext. 88692. Or Surgical Orthopaedics Unit, Burwood Hospital, on (03) 383-6834.

Swelling

If you've been given a sling, wear it only for the first one or two days. If you use a sling longer, your shoulder and elbow can get stiff and difficult to move. You can help to reduce the swelling by raising your arm. To do this, rest your hand on the opposite shoulder, or rest your arm on a pillow.

Activities

Avoid getting the cast wet by wrapping your arm in a plastic bag whenever you're in contact with water (while you're having a shower, for example). You can still do many household activities while you're in a cast, for example, folding the laundry.

Continue moving your arm gently so that it stays mobile.

Exercises

The following exercises are important and will help to reduce swelling and prevent stiffness and weakness. Do them four times a day.

You won't be able to do exercises 1 and 2 if your cast is above your elbow.

1. Shoulder

- Stretch your whole arm above your head.
- Hold this for five seconds.
- Repeat it five times.



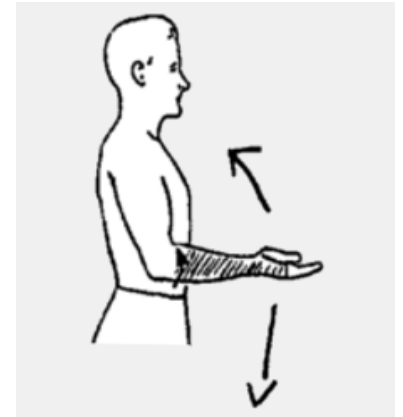
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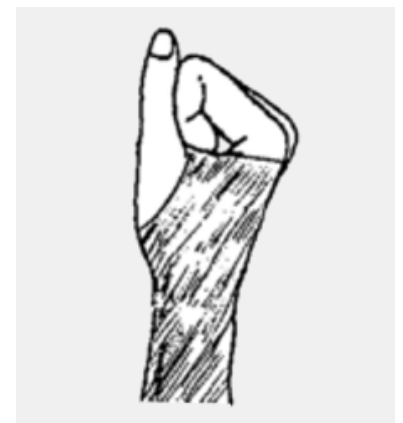
2. Elbow

- Fully bend and straighten your elbow.
- Repeat this five times.



3. Fingers

- Fully clench your fingers to your palm or cast. Make sure all three joints of each finger are bent.
- Straighten your fingers completely.
- Repeat this five times.



4. Thumb

- Rotate your thumb in all directions, as far as you can within your cast.
- Repeat this five times.



Written by Orthopaedic Services, Christchurch Hospital. Adapted by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed April 2018.