

Discharge Information: Confirmed or Suspected Scaphoid Fracture

This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your care after discharge.

Scaphoid Fracture

You or your family member has or is suspected to have a fracture of the scaphoid bone.

The scaphoid bone is one of eight carpal (wrist) bones. These small bones allow complex, yet delicate movements of the hand. The scaphoid sits below the thumb, and is shaped something like a kidney bean.

The pattern of blood supply in the scaphoid presents a problem when you sustain a scaphoid fracture. Because of the tenuous blood supply, a scaphoid fracture can sever this blood flow and stop the delivery of necessary oxygen and nutrients to the bone cells. When this occurs, healing can be slow, and the scaphoid fracture may not heal.

Initial Treatment

Subtle scaphoid fractures don't always show up on the initial x-ray. If your x-ray appears normal and you are tender over the scaphoid bone, you will be immobilised in a splint and reviewed 10 days following your injury.

If your x-ray shows a fracture, a half cast or "backslab" will be applied due to the presence or potential for swelling and follow up will be arranged either in the Orthopaedic Outpatients Clinic or with a private Orthopaedic surgeon.

Once supported in a cast, simple pain killers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen often provide adequate pain relief for these injuries; however your individual requirements will be assessed by your treating practitioner.

Unless it is contraindicated, adults with a diagnosis of wrist fracture will be commenced on Vitamin C 500mg daily for 50 days. Vitamin C has been shown to reduce the risk of ongoing wrist pain (complex regional pain syndrome) following a wrist fracture.

Rest the injured arm in a high arm sling for the first 24-48 hours.

Follow Up Treatment

Due to the potential healing problems associated with scaphoid fractures it is important that they are followed up correctly.

If you are not referred to an Orthopaedic specialist you must return to the Emergency Department in 10 days for review and to possibly have another x-ray to check for a fracture that was not initially visible.

If the second x-ray does not show a fracture but you are still tender over the scaphoid bone, you may be referred to an Orthopaedic specialist to consider an MRI scan.

If you are a Female over 45 years of age or a Male over 55 years of age and your fracture is the result of a fall from a standing height, this may indicate that you have a higher risk of osteoporosis, a disease in which the bones become fragile and brittle. If your treating practitioner has not discussed further investigations about osteoporosis, we advise that you arrange to see your general practitioner to discuss this further.

Plaster and Synthetic Cast Care

Initial Cast Care

If a cast or plaster splint has been applied you must do the following for the first 24 hours:

- Rest the arm in a sling
- Keep it elevated (eg. Sleep with your arm on a pillow)
- Check your hand for any of the following
 - Increasing pain
 - Increasing swelling
 - Numbness or tingling
 - Change in skin colour
 - Change in skin temperature

If you experience any of the above signs or symptoms please phone or return to the Emergency Department for review.

- Keep moving the fingers
- If you have a full cast, come back the following day to have your cast checked.

Ongoing Cast Care

Do:

- Keep the cast dry
- Check daily for cracks, breaks or soft areas
- Exercise joints not affected
- Be aware of a loose cast when the swelling subsides; replacement may be necessary
- If in doubt seek advice.

Don't:

- Get the cast wet
- Get the cast near anything hot. The cast material retains heat and may cause a burn
- Poke objects inside your cast
- Alter or cut your cast in any way
- Carry heavy objects or lean on your cast

Contact Numbers

Noarlunga Hospital
Emergency Department
08 8384 9288

Flinders Medical Centre
Emergency Department
08 8204 6065

Orthopaedic Clinic
08 8204 4787

Private Orthopaedic Surgeon

Name:

Your next review is:

Address:

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Contact number:

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Appointment Date:

If a referral has been sent to the Orthopaedic Clinic and you do not receive an appointment time within 5 days you will need to call them on the number listed above.

Appointment Time:

For more information

Emergency Department
Flinders Medical Centre
Flinders Drive
Bedford Park SA 5042

Emergency Department
Noarlunga Hospital
Alexander Kelly Drive
Noarlunga Centre SA 5168

Telephone: 08 8204 5042
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.

