Discharge advice: following a hand (fifth metacarpal) fracture

Information for patients

This sheet answers common questions about fifth metacarpal fractures. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

You have a minor break near the knuckle, which will usually heal in three weeks.

It may take six weeks or longer before your hand returns to normal function. Finger strapping may help the pain and restore normal movement earlier.

Because the break can be close to the joint, you must start moving your hand as soon as possible, even if this causes discomfort.

After one week remove the strapping.

Use your hand as normally as possible. This will not cause further damage, although heavy lifting may be sore for six to eight weeks.

Hand grip is generally unaffected by this type of injury.
As the bone heals a lump will form at the break site and the knuckle will not be as prominent. Some finger shortening is expected.

If the pain gets worse or lasts more than three weeks, or if you have any worries or concerns following discharge from hospital, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital you attended:

- **For Barnet Hospital:**
  - Phone on 020 8216 4445, 9am to midday, Monday-Friday, or leave a voicemail outside of these hours.
  - Email to RF-TR.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net

- **For the Royal Free Hospital:**
  - Phone on 020 7472 6222, 9am to midday, Monday-Friday, or leave a voicemail outside of these hours.
  - Email to RF-TR.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net.

- Attend the emergency department or your local walk in centre outside of these hours.
Assessment in the virtual fracture clinic

Our fracture clinics have been redesigned to offer you a safe and effective process for assessing your broken bone(s).

Coming to a traditional fracture clinic can be unnecessary in many cases, and often difficult due to the pain and immobility you may experience.

It can be apparent at the time of your first fracture clinic appointment that the opinion of a specialist is required.

This can now be provided at our virtual fracture clinic. The ‘virtual’ clinic is the hub of the new assessment process.

Your x-ray(s) and initial assessment documentation will be reviewed in the virtual fracture clinic by the orthopaedic team within 72 hours of your attendance at the emergency department.

You will not need to attend the hospital for the assessment to take place.

A trained, experienced orthopaedic nurse or physiotherapist will contact you by telephone after this assessment to discuss your treatment or provide advice. They may also arrange a follow-up appointment at the most appropriate clinic.
Date of your assessment:

An orthopaedic nurse or physiotherapist from the virtual fracture clinic will call you at some point between the hours of 9am and midday.

Please ensure the hospital has your correct contact details prior to leaving the emergency department and that you are available to receive this call. If you are not available on the telephone a message will be left where possible.

Patients and their GPs will receive a letter outlining the assessment and outcome.

If you have any questions, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital you attended using the contact details above.

Acknowledgment and references

We would like to thank Glasgow Royal Infirmary for allowing us to reproduce their leaflet. If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email RF-TR.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net.

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.

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