

How to help your wrist pain



Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust: delivering excellence in musculo-skeletal services and pelvic health physiotherapy across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

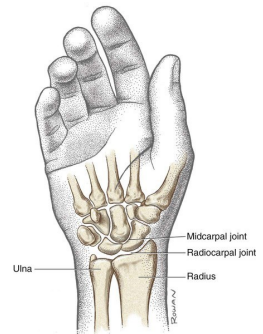
This guidance has been produced by the DynamicHealth physiotherapy service. It offers simple measures to help you manage your wrist problem safely; often the right advice and exercises are all you need to improve the problem.

If your wrist pain started after recent trauma, please seek medical advice before reading further.

About the wrist

The wrist joint is made up of two bones from your forearm (the ulnar and radius) which connect to a group of small bones in the hand called the carpal bones.

The main movements of the wrist are to go forwards and backwards (flexion and extension), however the wrist is also very important in rotational movements to place the hand in the right position to be used.



Causes of wrist pain

Wrist pain can often be caused by a stiffening of the joint, a weakening of the muscles around the joint or a combination of both. Pain in the wrist can often be relieved by working on these problems with the right exercises.

Wrist exercises

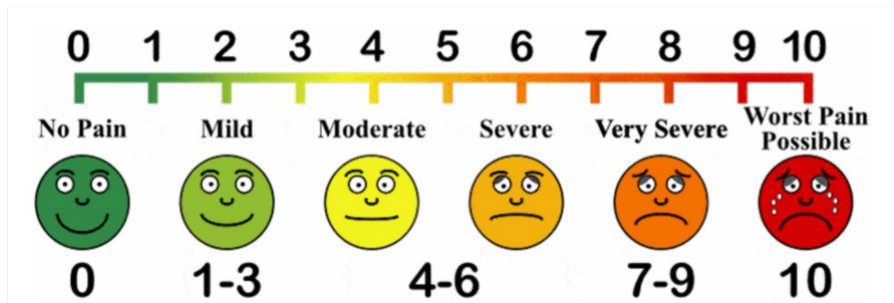
How much should I do?

- **Exercise every other day** – allowing enough rest is important to let the soft tissues recover and develop.
- **Choose 3 or 4 exercises** from the set below that are challenging but manageable.
- **Perform 3–5 sets of 5 repetitions** of each exercise.
- **Rest for up to 1–2 minutes** between each set.
- **Once an exercise is easy, progress it** by increasing the number of repetitions (aim for 10) or for holding the positions for longer, or moving to a more challenging exercise.

The following exercises do not need to be completed in any particular order and it can be helpful to try and gradually build your range of movement and strength at the same time. Choosing some challenging but manageable exercises from each section may be helpful.

How much pain is too much?

- **Before exercising, rate your pain** at that moment on a scale of 0–10, where 0 is no pain and 10 is the worst pain you can imagine.
- **A maximum pain level of 4/10 while exercising is fine**, as long as this eases within 45 minutes of the session and does not interfere with sleep or activities the next day.
- **If your pain increases beyond this, simplify the exercise** by reducing the range of movement or number of repetitions, or try an easier exercise.



Stretching exercises

If your wrist has lost movement because of pain or stiffness, it needs to be regained in order to strengthen the wrist effectively.



Prayer Hands Stretch

Place the palms of your hands against each other. Bend your wrists by pressing your hands downwards and hold the position for a moment. Then relax.



Wrist Flexion Stretch

Sit with your wrist over the edge of a table. Bend the wrist down and gently assist this movement with your other hand.



Ulnar/Radial Deviation

Hold fingers and wrist straight. Bend wrist first towards the little finger and then towards the thumb.



Forearm "Supination"

Standing or sitting with your elbow bent. Try to turn your hand so that the palm is facing directly upwards. To increase this stretch you can sit with your affected hand on a table and then help turn your hand over using your other hand.

Strengthening exercises

In the pictures below the model is using a weight, at home you could use a water bottle, as 1 litre = 1kg. Make sure however that whatever you are using, you are challenging yourself.



Wrist Extension

Using a dumbbell with your hand resting over a table, start with your palm facing down and your fingers pointing towards the floor (as shown in picture 1).

Raise your hand up so that your palm faces away from you (as shown in picture 2).

Slowly return to the position in picture 1.



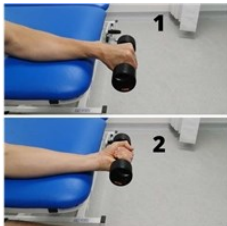
Wrist Flexion

Rest your wrist over a table with your palm facing up and your fingers pointing down towards the floor as shown in picture 1. Hold onto a heavy object, ideally a dumbbell if available. Curl your wrist to point your fingers up towards the ceiling.



Radial/Ulnar Deviation

Holding a heavy object with your wrist hanging over the edge of a table, have your thumb facing up towards the ceiling. Slowly lower your wrist as if you are pointing your thumb towards the floor. Slowly return to the starting position.



Wrist Pronation

Pronation and supination refers to which way your palm is facing. Holding a heavy object, start with your palm facing down, then turn your wrist so that it is facing upwards. Turn your hand over again to return to the starting position.

Top tips

- Don't feel you have to replicate the full movement of the exercise straight away. Use it as a guide, and build up gradually to the full movement over time.
- It is normal for it to take **6 – 12 weeks** before you notice an improvement in your pain, movement and strength, and it can take longer for complete improvement.
- As long as the activity is not painful, try to keep using your wrist throughout the day.
- General exercise can really help your recovery due to its stress reducing and pain relieving effect, so try to keep going with other activities you enjoy to keep fit. Even a brisk walk could really help.

Lifestyle and Wellbeing Support Services

<https://haycambspboro.co.uk/>

<https://healthyyou.org.uk/>

Speaking to the social prescriber at your GP practice can also be a very useful resource.

For further information about this service contact:

General Enquiries: 0300 555 0123

Physiotherapy Dept, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 6NT

Physiotherapy Dept, Brookfields Campus, 351 Mill Road, Cambridge, CB1 3DF

Physiotherapy Dept, Princess of Wales Hospital, Lynn Road, Ely, Cambs, CB6 1DN

Physiotherapy Dept, Doddington Hospital, Benwick Road, Doddington, Cambs, PE15 0UG

Physiotherapy Dept, Rowan Lodge, North Cambs Hospital, The Park, Wisbech, Cambs, PE13 3AB

Physiotherapy Dept, City Care Centre, Thorpe Road, Peterborough, PE3 6DB

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