

# WRIST SPRAIN

## What is a wrist sprain?

A sprain is an injury to a joint that causes a stretch or tear in a ligament. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect one bone to another. Your wrist is made up of 8 bones that are attached to your hand bones and the bones of your forearm. The wrist joint is covered by a joint capsule and the bones are connected by ligaments.

## How does it occur?

A wrist sprain can happen when you fall on your wrist or hand, when you are struck by an object, or during a forced motion of the wrist.

## What are the symptoms?

You have pain, swelling, and tenderness in your wrist.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will review your symptoms and examine your wrist. He or she may order an X-ray to be sure you have not broken any bones in your wrist.

## How is it treated?

Treatment may include:

- putting ice packs on your wrist for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away
- elevating your wrist on the back of a chair or couch when you are sitting or on a pillow when you are lying down (to help reduce swelling)
- taking an anti-inflammatory or other pain medicine prescribed by your healthcare provider (adults aged 65 years and older should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine for more than 7 days without their healthcare provider's approval)
- wearing a splint or cast on your wrist to prevent further injury
- doing exercises to help your wrist recover
- Some serious wrist sprains that involve ligament tears may need surgery

While you are recovering from your injury you will need to change your sport or activity to one that does not make your condition worse. For example, you may need to run instead of playing basketball.

## How long will the effects last?

The length of recovery depends on many factors such as your age and health, and if you have had a previous wrist injury. Recovery time also depends on the severity of the wrist sprain. Pain from a wrist sprain may last several weeks or longer. You need to stop doing the activities that cause pain until your wrist has improved. If you continue doing activities that cause pain, your symptoms will return and it will take longer to recover.

## When can I return to my sport or activity?

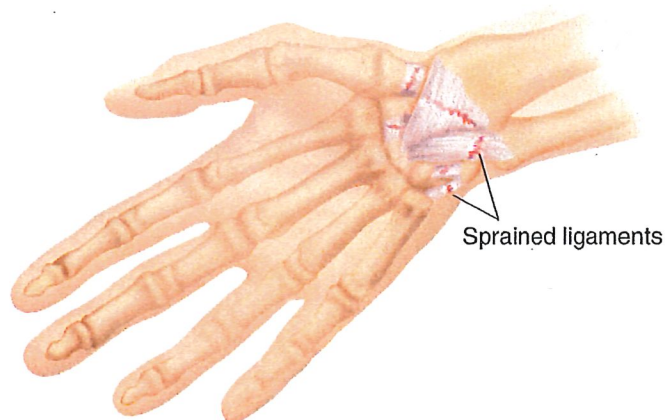
The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport or activity will be determined by how soon your wrist recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

You may return to your sport or activity when the injured wrist can move normally without pain. Your healthcare provider may allow you to return to competition with your wrist taped or in a brace. Your injured wrist, hand, and forearm need to have the same strength as the uninjured side. You must not have any pain when doing activities such as swinging a bat or a racquet or performing tumbling in gymnastics.

## How can I prevent a wrist sprain?

A wrist sprain usually occurs during an accident that is not preventable. However, when you are doing activities such as rollerblading be sure to wear protective wrist guards.

## WRIST SPRAIN





# WRIST SPRAIN REHABILITATION EXERCISES

The first 5 exercises are stretching exercises. You may do these when the sharp wrist pain goes away. The last 3 exercises are strengthening exercises. You may do these exercises when stretching is nearly painless.

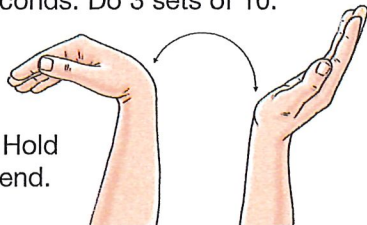
## Stretching exercises

### 1. WRIST RANGE OF MOTION

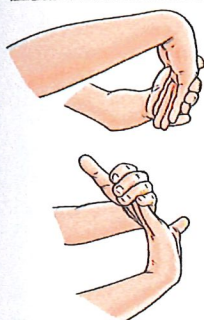
**A. Flexion:** Gently bend your wrist forward. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.

**B. Extension:** Gently bend your wrist backward. Hold this position 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.

**C. Side to side:** Gently move your wrist from side to side (a handshake motion). Hold for 5 seconds at each end. Do 3 sets of 10.



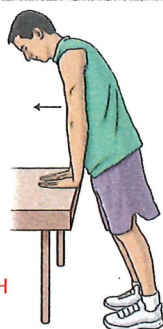
WRIST ACTIVE RANGE OF MOTION



WRIST STRETCH

**2. WRIST STRETCH:** With one hand, help to bend the opposite wrist down by pressing the back of your hand and holding it down for 15 to 30 seconds. Next, stretch the hand back by pressing the fingers in a backward direction and holding it for 15 to 30 seconds. Keep your elbow straight during this exercise. Do 3 sets on each hand.

**3. WRIST EXTENSION STRETCH:** Stand at a table with your palms down, fingers flat, and elbows straight. Lean your body weight forward. Hold this position for 15 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



WRIST EXTENSION STRETCH



WRIST FLEXION STRETCH

**4. WRIST FLEXION STRETCH:** Stand with the back of your hands on a table, palms facing up, fingers pointing toward your body, and elbows straight. Lean away from the table. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

**5. FOREARM PRONATION AND SUPINATION:** With your elbow bent 90°, turn your palm upward and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly turn your palm downward and



FOREARM PRONATION AND SUPINATION

hold for 5 seconds. Make sure you keep your elbow at your side and bent 90° throughout this exercise. Do 3 sets of 10.

When this exercise becomes pain free, do it with some weight in your hand such as a soup can or hammer handle.

## Strengthening exercises

**6. WRIST FLEXION:** Hold a can or hammer handle in your hand with your palm facing up. Bend your wrist upward. Slowly lower the weight and return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10.

Gradually increase the weight of the can or weight you are holding.



WRIST FLEXION

**7. WRIST EXTENSION:** Hold a soup can or hammer handle in your hand with your palm facing down. Slowly bend your wrist upward. Slowly lower the weight down into the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10.

Gradually increase the weight of the object you are holding.



WRIST EXTENSION

**8. GRIP STRENGTHENING:** Squeeze a rubber ball and hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.



GRIP STRENGTHENING