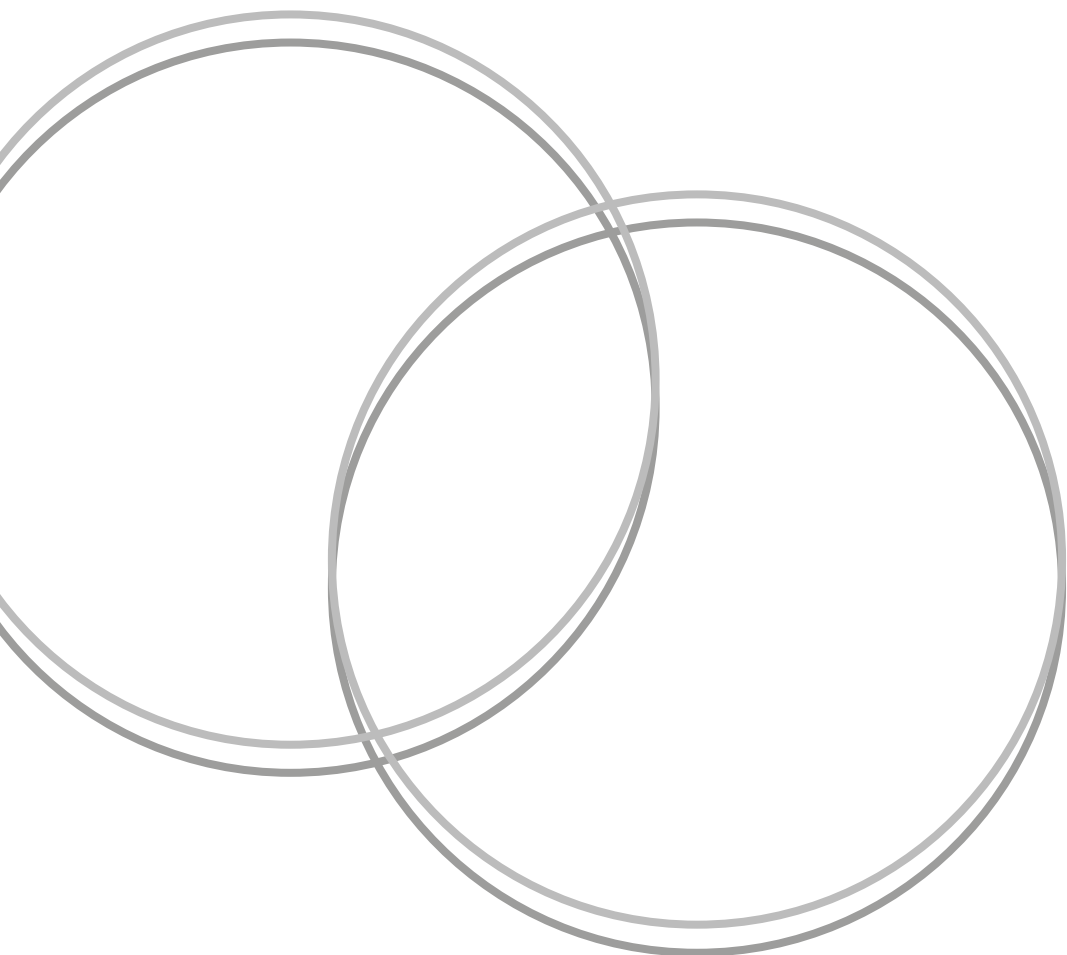




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Advice after a hand injury or surgery

Information for patients



Hand and Plastic Surgery Unit

This leaflet sets out what to expect in the recovery from your procedure. You will not routinely be sent a follow up appointment but will be able to request an appointment if you have any of the concerns explained in this leaflet. This is known as Patient Initiated Follow up (PIFU). It is intended to reduce the need for you to attend the hospital unnecessarily whilst also giving you access to help and advice should you need it.

# Hand care and management

## Hand elevation

- **Daytime:** For the first two weeks, always keep your hand elevated above your heart level. When seated, rest your arm on two pillows placed on the armrest of your chair, keeping your elbow straight.
- **Nighttime:** While sleeping, you do not need to wear your sling. Instead, rest your arm on two pillows beside you to maintain elevation.
- **Walking:** Ensure you wear the sling for essential mobility to support and protect your hand. Keeping your hand raised against your shoulder can help with swelling reduction.

## Keeping your hand dry and clean

- It's crucial to keep the hand area dry and clean to reduce the risk of infection. Follow your healthcare provider's advice on how to maintain hygiene without compromising your dressings or cast.

# Medication

## Pain management

- As the local anaesthetic wears off discomfort or pain may be experienced around the area. Simple analgesia will be enough in most cases with paracetamol only or sometimes a small amount of ibuprofen (ibuprofen should be avoided if you have asthma or stomach problems). These are available over the counter from any local pharmacy. This will also enable you to perform the recommended exercises more comfortably.

## Antibiotics

- If you've been prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed without missing doses, and ensure you complete the entire course to prevent infection.

## Exercises and restrictions

We advise you to take things easily for the first 48 hours in order to maintain a low risk of bleeding.

### Scar massage

- Wait until the wound is fully healed and the skin is closed before starting massage therapy, typically 2 to 3 weeks post-injury or surgery. Apply a moisturising lotion, oil, or silicone-based scar gel to the scar. Use two fingers to gently massage the scar in small, circular motions. Apply gentle pressure and move across the entire length of the scar.

### Managing your dressings

- If you have been given instructions by the healthcare professional on when you can safely remove dressing yourself, please do so. Use the extra dressings provided as instructed if necessary.

### Managing your splint

- If you have been given a splint and have received instructions from the healthcare professional regarding when you can safely remove it, please follow those instructions. Otherwise, leave your splint or cast on until you are assessed and managed at your next prebooked clinic appointment.

### Driving

- Ensure that someone is available to drive you home on the day of your visit to our clinic or after your surgery. It is your responsibility to ensure that you would be able to respond in an emergency the way you would normally, for example to be able to turn the steering wheel hard to avoid a collision.

### Time off work

- You are allowed to take up to 7 consecutive days off for health reasons before a sick note is required of you from your employer. If you think you will need more time off than this to recover from your procedure, please mention this to your surgeon and they will advise you. It will depend on how extensive the procedure is and the type of work you do so they will support you with a sick note if it is needed. See the government website for further information; [www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave](http://www.gov.uk/taking-sick-leave)

## **What to look out for**

**In the first few days/weeks after injury or surgery, watch out for excessive bleeding or pain.**

**If you experience bleeding apply constant pressure and elevate the hand above your head for 15 minutes. If bleeding does not stop with this action attend a local medical facility.**

**Be alert for signs of infection such as redness, pain, oozing, or discharge from the wound.**

## **How to contact us**

If you become unwell or need urgent assistance, please access the nearest emergency service. If you remain well but have any of the symptoms described above and would like advice or a clinic review, please use the contact number below to get in touch with us.

### **Hand and Plastic Injuries Service (HAPI clinic)**

Telephone: 01865 234 723

(Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm)

## **How to find us**

Please use the following website link to view the current John Radcliffe Hospital site map in pdf format:

[www.ouh.nhs.uk/hospitals/jr/documents/jr-hospital-sitemap](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/hospitals/jr/documents/jr-hospital-sitemap)

## **Tailored advice given by the attending Healthcare Staff**

### **Sutures**

None present/absorbable/remove after \_\_\_\_\_ days

### **Dressings**

Remove/change after \_\_\_\_\_ days

### **Splint**

None present/remove after \_\_\_\_\_ days



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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