Manipulation of Wrist Fractures
A guide for patients

Introduction
You have broken the radius bone in your wrist. Often in this type of break (fracture), the pieces move out of alignment. Manipulating (moving) them back into a more normal position allows the break to heal and reduces the risk of developing complications such as arthritis later on.

At the RIE, these fractures are usually manipulated in the Emergency Department (ED) under a type of anaesthetic called Intravenous Regional Anaesthesia (also known as a “Bier’s Block”); this will be discussed with you by the Anaesthetist.

The procedure itself
The Anaesthetist will give you an injection to numb your arm. A special cuff (which looks similar to a blood pressure cuff but is inflated much tighter) prevents the anaesthetic drug spreading elsewhere.

An ED doctor will manipulate (set) the bones into a better position and a cast will be applied. X-rays will be taken; a second manipulation may be necessary. Once finished, you will be taken back to the main part of the ED where you will be offered something to eat. Following a period of further observation (about 1 hour), you will be discharged with a follow up appointment requested.

Advantages of performing manipulation under Bier’s block
- It is a safe, reliable and routine procedure.
- It is performed in the ED: in most cases, you won't need to be admitted to a ward and then wait longer for an operation.
- It avoids the need for strong sedatives or the additional risks of a General Anaesthetic, particularly important if you have other medical problems.
- You can go home sooner and won't be drowsy afterwards.

Potential complications of the manipulation
- Superficial skin wounds: Rare, but can occur if your skin is very thin.
- Slight rash: Rare and should resolve itself over the next few days/weeks.
- Nerve injury: Very rare complication associated with the use of the cuff. However, as this is a short procedure it is very unlikely to occur.

Instructions for the day of the procedure
- Do not eat anything from midnight the night before. You may drink water until 2 hours beforehand.
- Take your morning medication including painkillers - but NOT diabetic medication - with a sip of water. If you have lots of medication, bringing a list is helpful.
- Please return to the ED at your allocated time and book in at reception.
- Please ensure that someone is able to accompany you home following the procedure.
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When you get home

- Try to keep your arm elevated for the first 12 hours to help any swelling go down. If the cast still feels tight, continue this for another 12 hours.
- Do not put jewellery back onto the injured limb until after you have been seen at the Trauma Triage Clinic (see below).
- Keep moving your fingers, elbow and shoulder to prevent stiffness and encourage circulation.
- Do not be alarmed if bruising travels to your fingers or elbow - this is very common after wrist fractures.
- You should return to the ED as soon as possible if your fingers feel swollen, tingly, numb or cold, are painful even after painkillers or turn blue or white.

Plaster care

- Do not get the cast wet - this will weaken it and your bone will no longer be properly supported.
- Even if the cast makes your skin feel very itchy, don’t be tempted to poke anything underneath it - this could cause a nasty sore.
- If the cast is uncomfortable through being too tight, loose, is rubbing or becomes cracked/broken please contact the Plaster Room for advice during the following hours: Mon-Thurs 08.30-16.00 and Fri 08.30-12.00 (Plaster Room tel. 0131 242 3408). Out with these hours contact the Emergency Department (0131 242 1300).

Follow up

An appointment for the Trauma Triage Clinic will be requested electronically (see separate information sheet). If the broken bones remain in a good alignment, no more may need to be done. Your wrist will stay in plaster until the bones heal (around 4-6 weeks).

If the fracture is unstable or the bones have moved out of alignment again, you may need an operation.

Please Re-attend the Emergency Department on __________________ at ________________

Remember: Do not eat anything from midnight

You may drink water until 2 hours beforehand