

Slings and wrist splints

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who need to wear a sling or wrist splint after an injury. It includes information about different types of sling and what you need to do when you get home.

Why do I need to wear a sling?

You may need a sling for any of the following reasons:

- To support your hand and arm.
- To reduce swelling.
- To relieve pain.
- To control bleeding of wounds.

What if I am in pain?

For the first two weeks, if you have pain, take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

If the pain continues after one to two weeks and you have not been given a follow up appointment, please contact your GP for further advice.

What types of sling are there?

There are three main types of sling: the broad arm sling, the high arm sling and collar and cuff.

Broad arm sling

This type of sling is used to support the arm. You need to take the sling off at night.

When it is on:

- You should be able to see your fingertips.
- Your hand should be a bit higher than your elbow.

High arm sling

This type of sling is recommended to keep your hand or wrist up to lessen swelling in the area. You need to take the sling off at night.

Similar to the broad arm sling, when it is on:

- You should be able to see your fingertips.
- Your hand should be a bit higher than your elbow.

Collar and cuff

This type of sling is usually recommended for injuries to the shoulder and elbow. The sling is fastened with Velcro. Make sure the loop of the cuff is around your wrist. You need to take the sling off at night.

Futura splints

This is a support splint for wrists which are injured, weak or need support after removal of a plaster cast. They are sometimes used for injuries of the thumb.

There are two types – one which covers the thumb and one which leaves the thumb uncovered.

The nurse or doctor caring for you will show you how to apply the splint and where to put the metal supports. For the splint to work properly, you will need to follow the instructions they give you carefully. Take the sling off at night.

How long do I need to wear the sling?

You will need to wear the sling for as long as the doctor or nurse in the Emergency Department has advised you. The amount of time will depend on the reason you need to wear it.

What should I do when I leave hospital?

You must:

- Follow the instructions you have been given about using the sling or splint.
- Remove your hand from the sling regularly and move all your joints by bending and straightening them. This will prevent any joints becoming stiff and painful.
- Remove the sling before going to sleep.
- Avoid keeping the sling on for longer than required.
- Avoid wearing rings (including wedding rings) and jewellery on your injured arm or hand until any swelling you have has fully gone. This is because jewellery can cause problems with blood circulation to the area while it is swollen.
- Apply ice on your injury to reduce any swelling. You can use crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. Do this for 10 minutes every four to six hours. **Caution** – ice can cause burns so do not apply it directly to your skin.
- Regularly keep your arm raised on a cushion or the arm of a chair. Do this for the first two days.

What should I look out for?

Go to your nearest Emergency Department at once if:

- You experience pins and needles or tingling in your fingers.
- Your fingers become blue or white.
- You get a lot of swelling.
- Your fingers become cold or numb (lose feeling).

If you have queries when you get home, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

Can I find out more?

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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