



# After Your Hand Fracture Surgery

## *Self-care and follow-up*

This handout explains follow-up care after surgery to repair a broken bone in your hand.

If your incision is red or there is drainage coming from it, call us right away at the phone numbers listed on the next page. Go to the emergency room if this occurs at night or on a weekend.

### Wound Care

- Metal screws or pins (hardware) may be used to repair a hand fracture. These keep the bones in place as they heal.
- After surgery, your hand will be placed in a bulky splint. This helps protect the fracture site and helps lessen swelling.
- When bathing, put a plastic bag around your hand to keep the splint clean and dry.
- Elevate your hand as much as possible to lessen swelling and pain.

### Pain Management

- You will receive a prescription for narcotic pain medicine. Take this medicine only if you need it.
- Be sure to talk with the clinic nurse about how to take your pain medicine. To best manage your pain, you must take your pain medicine the way it was prescribed. Taking the correct dose at the right time is very important.
- If you have uncomfortable side effects from the pain medicine, call the nurse at 206-598-4263.
- Please see “Medications After Surgery” for more instructions.

### Driving

- Do **not** drive if you are taking narcotic pain medicine. It is not safe. The medicine can make you sleepy and delay your reaction time.
- Once you are no longer taking the medicine, you may drive as soon as you can comfortably grip the steering wheel with both hands.

### Questions or Concerns?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Call the Hand Center at **206-598-4263**.

After office hours and on weekends and holidays: Call the hospital operator at **206-598-6190**. Ask for the Hand Fellow on call to be paged. Your call will be returned.

For more information, please visit the Hand Center online at [www.uwhand.com](http://www.uwhand.com).

### Activity

- You will have **very** little use of the operative hand for about 6 weeks after surgery.
- Do **not** lift anything heavier than a full soda can (about 1 pound or .45 kilogram) until your sutures have been removed.

### Follow-up

When you leave the surgery center, you should have a follow-up appointment in the Hand Center already set for 10 to 14 days after surgery. At this visit:

- Your sutures will be removed.
- We will place your hand in a splint or cast, depending on the type of fracture.
- You may be referred to a physical therapist who will assess your progress. The therapist will also teach you exercises to lessen the scarring around the incision and increase your hand strength and range of motion.

### Results

Many patients who have hand fracture surgery will regain full use of their hand. Most patients will have some stiffness after the fracture and surgery. We may need to do surgery to remove the hardware and scar tissue 3 to 4 months after the first surgery.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

**Hand Center**

Box 354740

4245 Roosevelt Way N.E. Seattle, WA 98105  
206-598-4263