

Patient Information for Consent

OS43 Wrist Fracture Surgery (child)

Expires end of July 2021

Mr. Z.O.Rahimtoola, MD, PhD, European Diploma Hand Surgery

Consultant Orthopaedic Hand Surgeon

www.GlobalHandSurgery.com

Get more information and references at www.aboutmyhealth.org

Tell us how useful you found this document at www.patientfeedback.org



Information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization confirmed COVID-19 (coronavirus) has now spread all over the world (this means it is a 'pandemic'). Even though lockdown has been eased, there is still a risk of catching coronavirus. Hospitals have very robust infection control procedures, however, it is impossible to make sure you don't catch coronavirus either before you come into the hospital or once you are there. You will need to think carefully about the risks associated with the procedure, the risk of catching coronavirus while you are in hospital, and of not going ahead with the procedure at all. Your healthcare team can help you understand the balance of these risks. If you catch the coronavirus, this could affect your recovery and might increase your risk of pneumonia and even death. Talk to your healthcare team about the balance of risk between waiting until the pandemic is over (this could be many months) and going ahead with your procedure.

Please visit the World Health Organization website: <https://www.who.int/> for up-to-date information.

Information about your procedure

It is essential that your surgery goes ahead as soon as possible. Following the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, some of the hospital processes have changed. You will need a coronavirus test before your operation. This involves the healthcare team taking a nasal and throat swab (using cotton wool to take a sample from the surface of your nasal passage and throat). The operation may need to go ahead before the results are available. Your healthcare team can tell you about the risks of coronavirus.

Coronavirus is highly contagious (meaning it spreads easily from person to person). The most common way that people catch it is by touching their face after they have touched a person or surface that has the virus on it. Try not to touch your face, especially if you have not washed your hands.

If possible, wash your hands with alcoholic gel or soap and water when you enter the hospital, at regular intervals after that, and when you move from one part of the hospital to another.

Be aware of social distancing. Chairs and beds are spaced apart. If your healthcare team need to be close to you, they will wear personal protective equipment (PPE). If you can't hear what they are saying because of their PPE, ask them to repeat it until you can.

You may not be allowed visitors, or your visiting may be restricted.

Your surgery is essential and the hospital and health professionals looking after you are very well equipped to perform it in a safe and clean environment. Guidance about coronavirus may change quickly; your healthcare team will have the most up-to-date information.

What is a wrist fracture?

A wrist fracture is a break of one or both of the bones in the forearm near your wrist joint. A wrist fracture is sometimes known as a 'distal radius fracture'.

Your surgeon has recommended an operation to treat your child's broken wrist.

This document will give you information about the benefits and risks to help you to be involved in the decision. If you think your child is mature enough, it is best to discuss the operation with them so they can be involved in the decision too. If you have any questions that this document does not answer, ask your surgeon or the healthcare team.

How does a wrist fracture happen?

Most wrist fractures happen when a child falls with their hand stretched out.

A child's bones are still flexible so the damage may involve just a bend in a bone or a small crack. However, the damage can be more severe with the bone broken in one or more places.

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to hold the pieces of bone in a good position while the fracture heals. This should help your child's wrist to get back to normal.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Some wrist fractures heal well in a cast. Even if the bones heal with a mild bend, it is possible that the bones will straighten as your child grows. This depends on the age of your child and how out of place the bones are. The more out of place the bones are, the more likely it is that your surgeon will recommend an operation.

What will happen if I decide that my child will not have the operation?

Your child's wrist will be put in a cast. If the bones do not heal in a good enough position, your child is more likely to have some stiffness in their wrist or forearm and problems using their wrist in the future.

If your child's wrist does not straighten as they grow, your surgeon may recommend an operation later on to reset the bones.

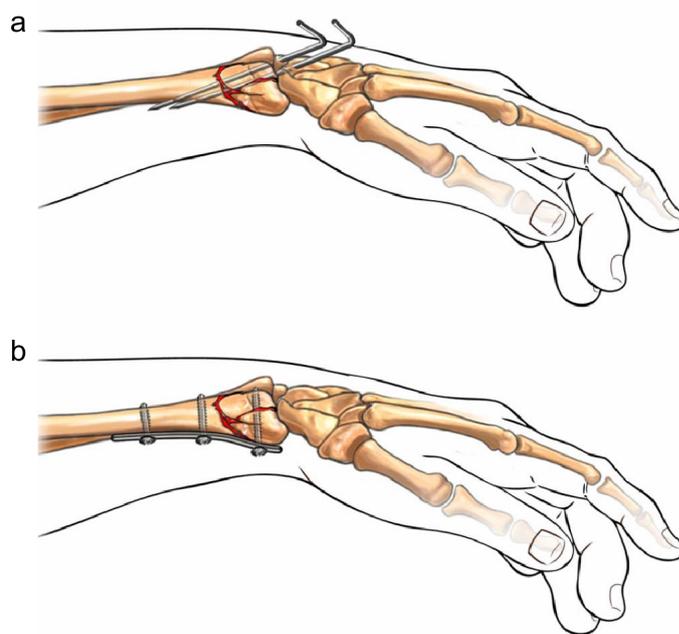
What does the operation involve?

The healthcare team will carry out a number of checks to make sure your child has the operation they came in for and on the correct side.

You can help by confirming to your surgeon and the healthcare team your child's name and the operation they are having. The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic. Your child may be given antibiotics during the operation to reduce the risk of infection.

There are several ways of treating your child's broken wrist. Your surgeon will manipulate the bones into a good position. They will decide if a cast is enough to hold the bones in place.

Your surgeon may need to hold the bones in place with wires inserted through the skin. Sometimes they may need to make a cut on the skin to fix a metal plate to the bone with screws.



a Wires

b Plate and screws

Your surgeon will discuss which option is likely to be best for your child. They will close any cuts on the skin with stitches and place a cast on your child's wrist.

What can I do to help make my child's operation a success?

Your child should try to maintain a healthy weight. They will have a higher risk of developing complications if they are overweight. Your child can reduce their risk of infection in a surgical wound.

- Your child should have a bath or shower either the day before or on the day of their operation. If your child has a temporary cast, you must keep the cast dry.
- Your child should keep warm around the time of the operation. Let the healthcare team know if your child feels cold.

What complications can happen?

The healthcare team will try to reduce the risk of complications.

Any numbers which relate to risk are from studies of people who have had this operation. Your doctor may be able to tell you if the risk of a complication is higher or lower for your child.

Some complications can be serious.

You should ask your doctor if there is anything you do not understand.

Your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the possible complications of having an anaesthetic.

General complications of any operation

- Pain. The healthcare team will give your child medication to control the pain and it is important that they take it as you are told so they can move about as advised.
- Bleeding during or after the operation.
- Infection of the surgical site (wound). It is usually safe to shower after 2 days but you should check with the healthcare team. You must keep the cast dry. Let the healthcare team know if your child gets a high temperature, you notice pus in their wound, or if their wound becomes red, sore or painful. An infection usually settles with antibiotics but your child may need another operation.
- Unsightly scarring of the skin.

Specific complications of this operation

- Damage to nerves, leading to a patch of numb skin or a tender scar (risk: 1 in 100). This usually gets better but may be permanent.
- Infection of the bone caused by an infection around a wire or plate (risk: 1 in 100). Your child will need a course of antibiotics or another operation.
- The bones move out of position. Your child will have an x-ray after about a week to check the position of the bones. Sometimes the bones have moved enough out of place for your surgeon to recommend another operation (risk: less than 1 in 5 if your child had only a manipulation).
- Infection around a wire (risk: 1 in 20). This usually settles when the wire is removed.

How soon will my child recover?

In hospital

After the operation your child will be transferred to the recovery area and then to the ward. They should be able to go home the same day or the day after. However, your doctor may recommend that your child stays a little longer.

If you are worried about anything, in hospital or at home, contact the healthcare team. They should be able to reassure you or identify and treat any complications.

Returning to normal activities

Your child should recover quickly and be back to normal within a few days.

You must keep the cast dry to reduce the risk of infection and the bones moving out of place.

It is usual for children to return to school after 2 to 7 days.

Your child should keep their hand raised for a few days so that the swelling settles. It is important to encourage them to move their fingers to help reduce any stiffness.

Most fractures heal in about a month and then the cast is removed. Your doctor will advise you on how much longer you should keep your child from doing activities such as contact sports, climbing on play equipment and riding a bicycle.

If your surgeon used wires, they will usually be removed at the same time as the cast. This procedure does not need another anaesthetic unless the wires have become buried in the skin.

The future

Most children make a good recovery and are able to return to normal activities.

If your child had a metal plate fixed to the bone, your doctor may recommend another operation to remove it. This is performed up to a year later and your child will need some time off their usual activities while the bone strengthens.

If the fracture involved the growing part of a bone, your child may get some stiffness in their wrist and a change in the rate of growth of the bone (risk: 1 in 15).

Summary

For some types of wrist fracture, an operation is the best way to make sure the bones heal in a good position.

Surgery is usually safe and effective but complications can happen. You need to know about them to help you to make an informed decision about surgery for your child. Knowing about them will also help you to help the healthcare team to detect and treat any problems early.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Acknowledgements

Reviewers: Sally Hobson (MRCS, FRCS), Adam Watts (MBBS, FRCS)

Illustrator: Medical Illustration Copyright © Nucleus Medical Art. All rights reserved. www.nucleusinc.com

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.