

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 the swelling
- To relieve the pain
- To control bleeding of the 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.

Different types of splints

- **Broad arm sling**

The hand should be slightly higher than the elbow, when correctly applied. The base of the sling should lie at the base of the little finger, leaving the fingernails exposed. It is used to give support to an injured arm, an injured wrist or forearm.

- **High arm sling**

This is used to support the hand and forearm in a well-raised position, with the fingertips touching the opposite shoulder. This helps to support the arm with an injury or infection, control bleeding from wounds in the forearm or hand or reduce swelling.

- **Poly Sling / Shoulder immobiliser**

This is used for clavicle fractures or radial head fractures. This type of sling is more substantial for injuries that need more support.

- **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.

- **Futuro splint**

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.

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.

Sleeping

It is important you wear your sling in bed for the recommended period unless you are instructed otherwise. Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise you about this.

It is best if you sleep on your back or unaffected side. When lying on your back, we suggest you use a pillow underneath your injured arm for support.

When lying on your unaffected side, we suggest you use a pillow underneath your injured arm for support, and behind your back. This is to prevent you from rolling onto your injured arm in the night.

Bathing

If you have had any dressings or bandages applied, it is important for them to stay dry when you wash yourself. You can remove your sling when bathing or showering, but it is important to keep your

arm close to your body to limit movement. If you are washing yourself using a bowl and sponge, we recommend you:

Rest your injured arm on a table whilst you wash. This is to ensure your skin is dry, especially under your armpit, as this will prevent skin irritation. Seek assistance, if required, to wash and dress your unaffected arm.

Getting dressed

While you are wearing the sling, we recommend you wear loose-fitting or front-opening clothes, such as a shirt or blouse, as they are easier to get on and off.

Make sure you put your injured arm into your clothes first. Once you have dressed your upper body, remember to place your arm back into the sling.

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)

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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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

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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