



University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: WRIST INJURY

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a wrist injury, most likely a sprain. A sprain is a stretching or tear in ligaments and tendons (rope-like bands holding bones and muscles in place) of the joint.

At present, there is no obvious sign of a fracture (break) or dislocation in the wrist. However, a sprain is a significant injury, and should be treated, not ignored. Also, there is still a chance that a hidden fracture (crack) in the wrist is present. Proper treatment of a sprain also provides good *initial* treatment for a hidden fracture. However, if a hidden fracture exists (your wrist will not improve quickly) and is not treated more thoroughly, you could lose partial function of the wrist/hand.

**X-ray or not, realize that if your symptoms persist, repeat evaluation is necessary.**

Follow-up with the Student Health Center or your personal/referral doctor as outlined below. Your provider can make sure the wrist has healed properly, continue treatment if healing is incomplete, or reevaluate for a hidden fracture if healing is slow.

### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR WRIST INJURY:

1. Above all, put the wrist to rest! Do not use the wrist. Keep the joint still by wearing the splint. Resting the wrist not only lessens pain, it also promotes healing.
2. Elevate the wrist above the level of your heart. Apply cold packs off-and-on. Elevation and cold during the first two days help minimize both pain and swelling.
3. Wear the splint day and night. The splint can be removed briefly for bathing, dressing, or to adjust the splint.
4. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a sprained wrist. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
5. If you are getting an X-ray, your provider should call you an X-ray report within 24 hours of getting the x-ray. If you do not hear from your provider, call or return to the Student Health Center to get the report.
6. Return to the Student Health Center or schedule a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral doctor about seven to ten days following injury. If you do not have *full, pain-free* wrist movement by ten days after injury, follow-up is *essential* to make sure your sprain is healing properly and to make sure no hidden fracture is present. Multiple exams, until you are completely healed, or repeat X-rays may be necessary.
7. Refrain from playing sports until your wrist has full, pain-free movement for at least one week.