

# Possible Scaphoid Fracture

Information for parents and carers

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## What is the scaphoid bone (skay-foyd)?

The scaphoid bone is a small bone on the thumb side of your wrist.

## What causes a scaphoid fracture?

Most scaphoid fractures occur when you stretch your hand out in front of you to protect yourself from a fall. A fracture is the same as a break.

## What are the symptoms?

Because most scaphoid fractures do not cause the wrist to look broken and many cause only minor symptoms, it can be hard to know if your scaphoid bone is broken. If the bone is broken, your child may have:

- Pain, tenderness, or swelling on the thumb side of their wrist.
- Difficulty gripping things or twisting their wrist or thumb.
- Swelling around their wrist.

It can be hard to tell the difference between a wrist that is sprained and one that is broken: x-rays do not always show the fracture.

## How is a scaphoid fracture diagnosed?

It is often difficult to diagnose a scaphoid fracture. Usually, an x-ray is requested but this may not show the fracture immediately. If this is the case, your child will be given a wrist splint for support. You will also be given a phone number to use if your child is still having pain in the wrist after 2 weeks.

If your child is still having pain, call the number to book a clinic appointment. At the clinic, your child will be examined again, and will most likely have a repeat x-ray done to see if the fracture can now be seen on this x-ray. There are times when we will also need to arrange another type of scan to be very sure there is a break in the bone. This is called an MRI scan and will be discussed at clinic if we think you need this.

## What happens in the meantime?

The scaphoid bone has a poor blood supply and, as a result, it is important that a fracture is not missed. We will assume the bone is broken until we are certain it is not as this is the safest option for your child.

This involves placing the affected wrist in a splint. This should be worn most of the time, but can be taken off for 10 minutes a few times a day to let your child's skin breathe.

The splint will help to reduce pain and your child can also use pain medication like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

## What if it is broken?

Treatment for scaphoid fractures includes wearing a splint or plaster cast. In general terms, if the bone is broken then your child will require a plaster cast which they will need to wear for 6 weeks. Very rarely a bad fracture may need an operation. This will all be discussed with you and your child at clinics.

## Follow-up

To make a follow-up appointment please call

Paediatric Emergency Department Reception: - 0131 312 0017 or 0131 312 0018

Royal Hospital for Children and Young People  
50 Little France Crescent  
Edinburgh  
EH16 4TJ  
Tel. **0131 536 1000**

