

Bruised hand

You have been diagnosed in the Emergency Department with a contusion (bruise) of the hand. This leaflet explains how to care for your hand at home.

How was it diagnosed?

The Emergency Department doctor or nurse practitioner has examined your hand and you may have had X-rays taken to rule out a broken bone/ bones (fractures)

What are the signs and symptoms?

Depending on the cause and extent of the injury (e.g. crush injury), you may have significant swelling over the hand and the fingers. This is due to direct trauma to the small blood vessels (capillaries and veins) where some blood leaks into the muscles, tendons and soft tissues of the hand. As a result you may experience varying degrees of pain, loss of gripping power, reduced ability to bend and extend the affected fingers and sometimes even some numbness or pins and needles. The actual bruising (discoloration of the skin) may appear at a later stage depending on the depth and extent of injury.

What is the treatment of a bruised hand?

- Apply ice over the injury 3-4 times a day during the first few days, especially if it is very swollen. Put the ice in a bag (or use a packet of frozen peas) and apply a towel between the skin and the ice bag/frozen peas.
- Keep the swollen hand above the level of the heart to prevent further swelling.
- Take over-the-counter painkillers such as Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen (Nurofen). Please read and follow the manufacturer's advice for dosage, side effects and precautions. Talk to your GP if you are not sure about taking painkillers.
- Gently massage the affected hand from the fingertips towards the elbow while opening and closing your hand. This will help to keep the swelling down and improve the range of motion.
- Do not lift or carry heavy items in your injured hand while still recovering. This may slow down the healing process or in fact worsen your symptoms.

What to look out for

Seek further medical advice if you experience any of the following:

- Increasing pain, swelling and/or redness - this may indicate infection especially if there has been a break in the skin.
- Failure to improve movement or grip may lead to a “frozen hand” with loss of function. This could be a result of tendon damage (tendons are the cord-like structures attached to your fingers which help bend and open them) or a build up of calcium inside the tendon sheaths.
- Excessive swelling from internal bleeding, especially if you are taking blood thinning medicines such as Warfarin.

If in doubt, contact your GP, local Emergency Department or NHS 111.

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

You can also pick up a copy of the Trust leaflet called ‘Talk to us’, which explains how you can raise concerns or give feedback on your experience at the hospital.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – *How likely are you to recommend our service to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment?* - by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

Further information

More information is available on the Trust website:

www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Emergency Department, December 2017

Review due: December 2019