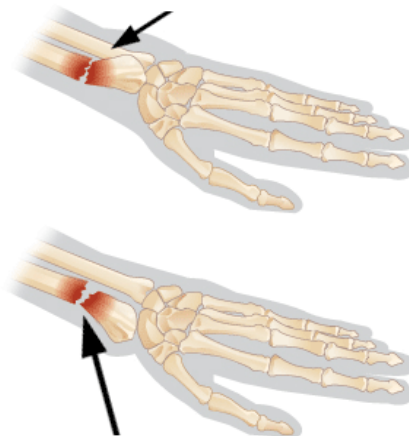




DISTAL RADIUS FRACTURE



Definition

A distal radius fracture is a fracture to the bottom part of the radius (forearm), close to the base of the thumb. Distal radius fractures are usually associated with pain and swelling to the area. Pain may be worsened by movement of the wrist or attempted weight bearing.

Surgical options

In cases where the fracture is non-displaced, immobilization in a cast may be indicated. Where the fracture is associated with displacement, angulation or fragments, surgical intervention may include reducing the fracture with plates, screws or wires (Open Reduction Internal Fixation or ORIF). Casting or splinting will also follow ORIF to stabilise the wrist. The length of splinting or casting is usually 4-6 weeks, which is the length of time for adequate bone healing to occur.

Therapy

Therapy for a distal radius fracture usually lasts about 3-4 months. However, therapy and recovery may be longer, depending on the severity of the injury or extent of the surgery.

Generally, following surgery, therapy will focus on management of pain and swelling in the affected hand as well as maintenance of joint flexibility in the fingers and the thumb. Within 2-4 weeks after the operation, therapy will progress to management of scar tissue, strengthening of the hand as well as regaining movement in the wrist. At the appropriate time, therapy will continue to address range of motion in the wrist and focus on regaining adequate strength in the wrist to allow good functioning in activities of daily living. With good healing of the fracture as well as good performance in hand therapy, it is possible to achieve full range of movement and muscle strength in the affected hand and arm.