



IN TOUCH Hand Therapy HANDout #5

ULNAR SIDED WRIST PAIN - TFCC INJURIES

We commonly treat patients with pain over the ulnar aspect of the wrist.

Often this follows a fall on the outstretched hand or an injury involving forceful twisting of the forearm. This can be associated with a feeling of weakness, clicking & clunking, tendonitis of ECU and occasionally irritation of the ulnar nerve. The distal radio-ulnar joint can also be involved.

Ulnar sided wrist pain is a common problem following fractured radius (Colle's fracture at the wrist), where there is a degree of radial shortening, resulting in an apparent positive ulnar variance. This places increased loading across the ulnar head onto the ulnar disc and associated ligaments causing problematic pain which is slow to settle.

Hand therapy has much to offer patients with ulnar sided wrist pain:

- Accurate assessment of joint structures and function
- Wrist bracing, strapping or splinting specific to the ulnar aspect of the joint
- Strengthening and proprioceptive exercises for stabilising musculature
- Nerve mobilisation techniques and home programmes
- Local treatments which may include ultrasound, acupuncture etc.
- Advice about potentially aggravating postures and activity modification
- Graduated return to work
- Onward referral to Hand Surgeons or Sports Physicians if appropriate

We recently introduced the **Wrist Widget** splint at the clinic which has given some pleasing results for patients with ulnar sided wrist pain. The splint is particularly useful for patients who have pain when weightbearing on the wrist, which can be alleviated by wearing the brace.

It is easy to apply, unobtrusive and a good longer term alternative to strapping. Recent encouraging feedback has been received from patients who take part in volleyball, golf and football .

In conjunction with recent evidence supporting the use of strengthening exercises for the wrist stabilisers and activities improving proprioception, we hope to give longer term relief for patients with problematic wrist pain.

Prosser R (1995) 'Conservative management of ulnar carpal instability' Aust J Physiotherapy 41: 41-46

Lees. V. (2001) Ulnar sided wrist pain. HandTher 6:1 (5-8)

www.wristwidget.com

