

February, 2020

Paragon Orthopedic Center  
Grants Pass, Oregon



## How to Fall

Yes, you read that correctly. Dr. Bents recently noted that if people understood how to fall, he wouldn't see so many broken wrists. Maybe this is something you've never considered. It is worthy to think it through ahead of a fall and avoid serious injuries that could impact your life for weeks, months, and sometimes years. There are several other bones that can be and do get broken in a fall, but the way most people fall, by holding out their arms straight, the fragile bones of the wrist are broken more easily. For this reason, we will focus on the wrist when it comes to falls.

**FACTS:** A broken wrist is called a *distal radius fracture*. The most common reason for this fracture is from falling. It is not always surgical. If the broken bone is in good position, you will be casted for about 6 weeks. With 8 bones in the wrist, treatment of a wrist fracture varies, depending on which are affected.

Firstly, **DO NOT EXTEND YOUR ARMS** when you fall. It's an instinct for most of us. If you watch children on a playground, where frequent falls occur for them, it's what they do. They can manage falling down because children's bodies are lower to the ground and can handle the impact more easily than when we are older, taller, heavier, and maybe have weaker bones. Instead of sticking out your arms to break the fall, use your arms to protect your head. That will give those arms something to do and after all, protecting your brain should be a priority. Dr. Bents also recommends making your hands into fists. You are less likely to land the fall using your hands without them being flat, so ball up your hands and bend at the elbow. Your elbows can handle the impact better than your small wrist bones.

Secondly, if you are able to rotate during the fall, try to fall on your side or your bottom. The impact will be on the bigger bones of your pelvis, which are harder to break than the fragile bones of the wrist. You can then roll over to get up.

The impact on life after a wrist injury can be significant. Non-surgical wrist fractures require six weeks in a cast and recovery is even longer if you require surgery. This doesn't include healing time and therapy after the cast has been removed. Full recovery is *at least* a year. Patients typically are left with stiffness in the joint and **cannot** return to all activities. Yes, a wrist injury could impact the rest of your life.

Of course, there are traumatic falls that you have absolutely no control over. Dr. Bents and Dr. Van Horne have done many wrist surgeries and are there for you and your family if your fall results in a serious injury. Their combined 60+ years of experience are reassurance that you're in very good hands at Paragon Orthopedic Center.

The following articles were referenced for this newsletter:

<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/globalassets/pdfs/aaosfallprevention.pdf>

<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/distal-radius-fractures-broken-wrist/>

