

Orthopaedic Connection

Hand and Wrist - 27 Bones

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Think about this for a moment. In one hand and wrist there are 27 bones. If my addition is right then there are 54 in both hands and wrists.

There are only 206 bones in the whole body! More than 25% of our total number of bones is in the hands and wrists.

The hand and wrist are incredibly complicated structures. Add to that the fact that arthritis and injuries to the hand and wrist are very common - folks we have a big problem here.

Treating these is a major challenge for me, but it is worth it to see people get better and become more comfortable and functional.

Injuries

Injuries are anything you can imagine from

- fractures, dislocations
- lacerations
- burns
- crush injuries
- amputations
- nerve injuries

Arthritis

The hand and wrist have a huge number of small joints between those 27 bones. They all have to work together to produce movement. Think of the fantastic range of things a hand can do. From delicate things like touching a baby or to play a violin to boxing or running a jackhammer and everything in between.

Arthritis comes from

- Genetics (your parents or grandparents)

- Inflammation or infection
- Fractures or dislocations

The stage is set for arthritis by an injured joint. According to my professional group, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons the hand and wrist are 7 times more likely to become arthritic after injury.

7 TIMES! Even if the injury is properly treated.

You know you are there when the symptoms of pain, swelling, stiffness, decreased strength and a grating or grinding set in.

Treatment

If a combination of heat, Advil (or similar), physical or occupational therapy do not help there probably is an operation that will relieve pain and improve use of the hand and wrist. Patients do not come into my office asking for surgery, but it is my job to make them aware of what is available to help them. I have to individualize treatment based on how demanding their activities are in use of the hand and wrist.

Surgical Procedures

There are a wide variety of different surgical procedures that we use based on the problem.

- Fusion of two or more bones (arthrodesis)
- Remove a row of wrist bones
- Arthroscopic surgery to clean up joint surfaces
- Replace a bone or joint with an implant
- Insert a tissue bank tendon to replace a damaged bone usually in the thumb
- Total wrist replacement as a last resort

The problem with the hand and wrist is that the joint itself and joint surfaces are small and difficult to work with compared to the knee or hip for example.

The problems are treatable, however if you choose the right procedure for the right patient. Patients with hand and wrist problems are some of my most grateful patients.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

www.orthopodsurgeon.com is a great source of musculoskeletal information that you can use. In addition it is your entry to the Gratiot County Herald Archive of all articles I have written for GCH Orthopaedic Connection. They are all listed, most recent all the way back to the first. A couple of mouse clicks and the whole article appears!

The articles and website cover everything I treat in the office and hospital. Check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush