Acute Care for Hand/Wrist Injuries

1. **Rest:** Rest your hand and wrist as much as possible. Your therapist or doctor may give you a splint or brace to help with this. Wear it for all painful activities. If you’re having pain while sleeping, you may wear it at night, but be sure to loosen it to allow for circulation.

2. **Ice:** Apply a cold pack, placed in a pillowcase, to the swollen area for 15-20 minutes, 4-6 times per day. Or, for more direct cold therapy, massage the painful area with an ice cube for 5-10 minutes (until numb and red). Elevate the hand/wrist while you are applying ice.

3. **Elevation:** During the first 48-72 hours after your injury, you should sleep with your hand elevated on a pillow.

4. **Pain-Free Range of Motion:** Several times per day remove your brace (if you have one) and move your hand/wrist up and down, and side to side as far as you can without pain.

5. **Neutral Hand/Wrist Positioning:** When typing or writing, be sure to maintain your hand/wrist in neutral. You can find this position by placing your hand/forearm on a table in a relaxed position. Your hand should be slightly cupped. You may need to wear your brace for support if you are having pain.

6. **Progression to Strengthening:** In a week or two, when your hand/wrist are feeling better, you can start light strengthening.

   A.) **Ball Squeezes:** Use a squishy ball (ie stress ball). Gently squeeze the ball and hold for 10 seconds. Do 15-20 repetitions, 4-6 times daily. Do not push through pain.

   B.) **Finger Extension:** Place a rubber band around your finger tips, including the thumb and gently extend your fingers, holding for 10 seconds. Do 15-20 repetitions, 4-6 times daily.

7. **Weaning From the Brace:** In a few weeks, once you feel better, you can slowly start weaning from the brace. Continue to use it for sports or more painful activities for another few weeks, at which time you can stop using it entirely.