

# Distal Radius Fractures: A Common Injury in a Tricky Location



**Damien Davis, MD**  
Hand and Upper Extremity  
Surgery

**P**recision approaches to treat fractures within the complex anatomy of the hand and wrist are providing better outcomes, especially for patients with distal radius fractures. Technology teamed with therapy mitigate the risk for treatment complications.

"Distal radius fractures are the most common upper extremity fracture," said Damien Davis, MD, a hand and upper extremity surgeon with Englewood Orthopedic Associates, part of the Englewood Health Physician Network.

The majority of distal radius fractures can be treated nonoperatively with reduction of the fracture and cast immobilization, but

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"Soft tissue complications associated with distal radius fractures such as nerve injuries or stiffness, of the fingers, can be more permanent and disabling than the actual bone injury itself," he said. Dr. Davis and his colleagues consistently incorporate new technology and treatment approaches to mitigate the risk for complications.

"There are always research and advancements being made with regard to fracture fixation technology," Dr. Davis explained. These new tools are designed to optimize strength and support while avoiding malunion and disrupting the delicate structures around the fracture. For example, Dr. Davis said, "the plates that are used to treat the majority of distal radius fractures have become lower profile over the years. These lower profile designs are less irritating to the surrounding soft tissue structures."

Physicians who treat patients with distal radius fractures also avoid

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some will require surgery. Surgical repair of upper extremity fractures requires careful navigation of patient anatomy to avoid complications involving nerves, muscles, blood vessels and soft tissues that surround the injured bone.

In the case of distal radius fractures, Dr. Davis explained, some surgical complications can result in injuries that are more severe than the initial fracture (*Curr Rev*

complications through specialized therapy. "Distal radius fractures that are treated either operatively or nonoperatively can result in stiffness of the wrist and/or hand. Many adult patients will be prescribed therapy with a certified hand therapist to help mitigate the stiffness and optimize their function and outcome after a distal radius fracture."