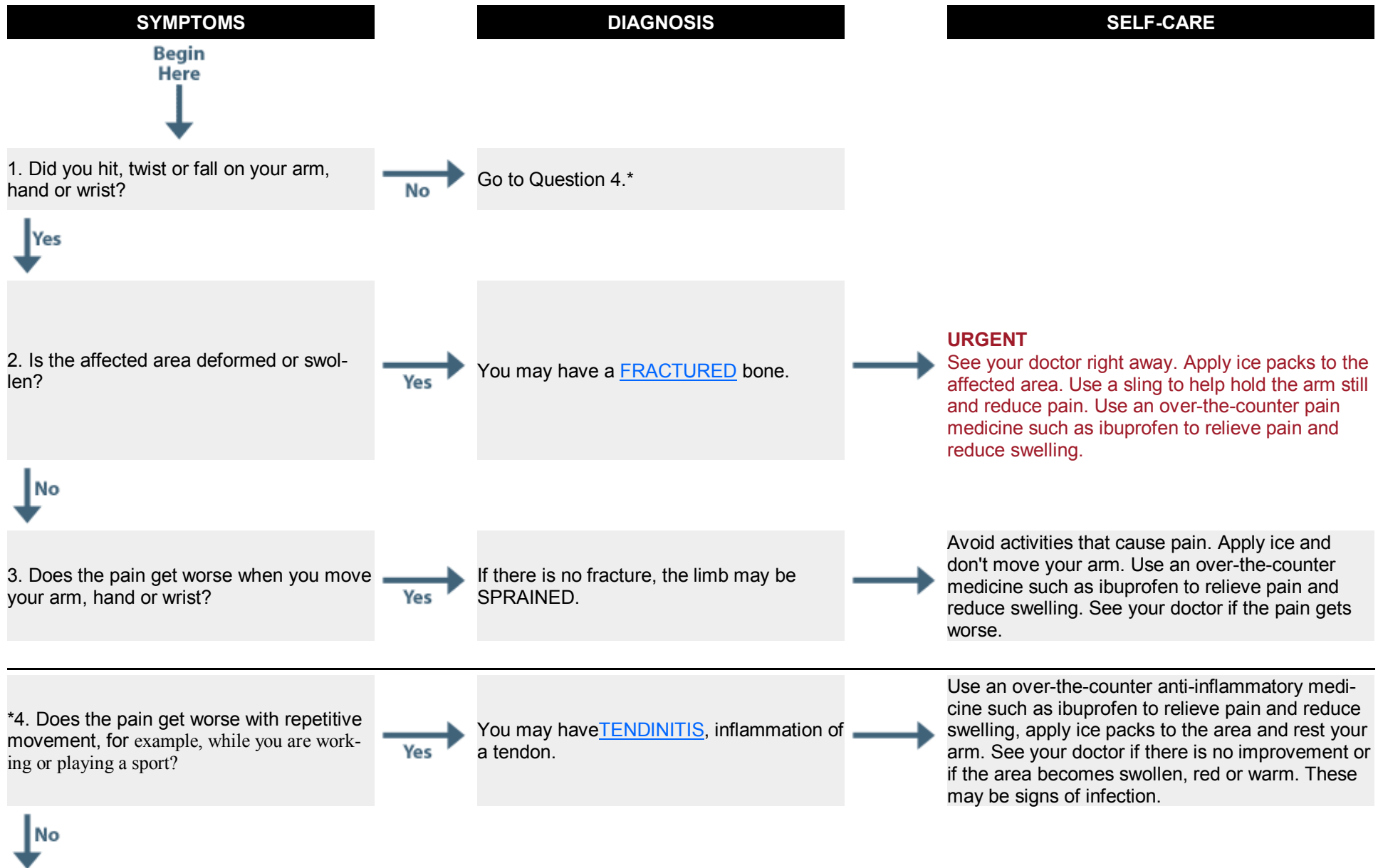


# Hand/Wrist/Arm Problems

Pain and other problems in the hands, wrists and arms can be caused by injury, certain activities or other health problems. Follow this chart for more information.



5. Is it painful to grip a doorknob, and does the pain start on the outside of your elbow and move down your arm to your wrist?

Yes

You may have [TENNIS ELBOW](#), a type of [TENDINITIS](#).

Rest the arm, apply ice packs to the elbow, and use an anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen. See your doctor if there's no improvement, you can't bend your elbow, or if the area becomes swollen, red or warm. These may be signs of infection.

No

6. Do you have numbness or pain in your fingers, hand, wrist or arm, especially when you flex your wrist?

Yes

You may have [CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME](#), a compression of the median nerve in the wrist and hand.

Use anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen to reduce pain and swelling. A wrist splint may also ease pain and numbness. If your symptoms don't improve, see your doctor.

No

7. Do you have a firm lump or swelling near your wrist or finger joints?

Yes

You may have a [GANGLION CYST](#), a common non-cancerous cyst.

See your doctor if the cyst causes pain or begins to grow rapidly.

No

8. Do you have redness, swelling or pain in the skin around a cut or wound, or is there a red streak anywhere on your arm or hand?

Yes

These are all signs of [INFECTION](#) in the hand, wrist or arm.

**URGENT**  
See your doctor right away. Use an antibiotic ointment on infected cuts.

No

9. Are one or more joints swollen and tender?

Yes

You may have [RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS](#), an inflammatory joint condition. You may also have [GOUT](#), or an [INFECTION](#) of the joint or bone.

See your doctor right away. Use an anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen to relieve pain and reduce swelling.

No

For more information, please talk to your doctor. If you think the problem is serious, call your doctor right away.

*This tool has been reviewed by doctors and is for general educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical advice. The information in this tool should not be relied upon to make decisions about your health. Always consult your family doctor with questions about your individual condition(s) and/or circumstances. Source: American Academy of Family Physicians. Family Health & Medical Guide. Dallas: Word Publishing; 1996.*