

Colles Fractures

Overview

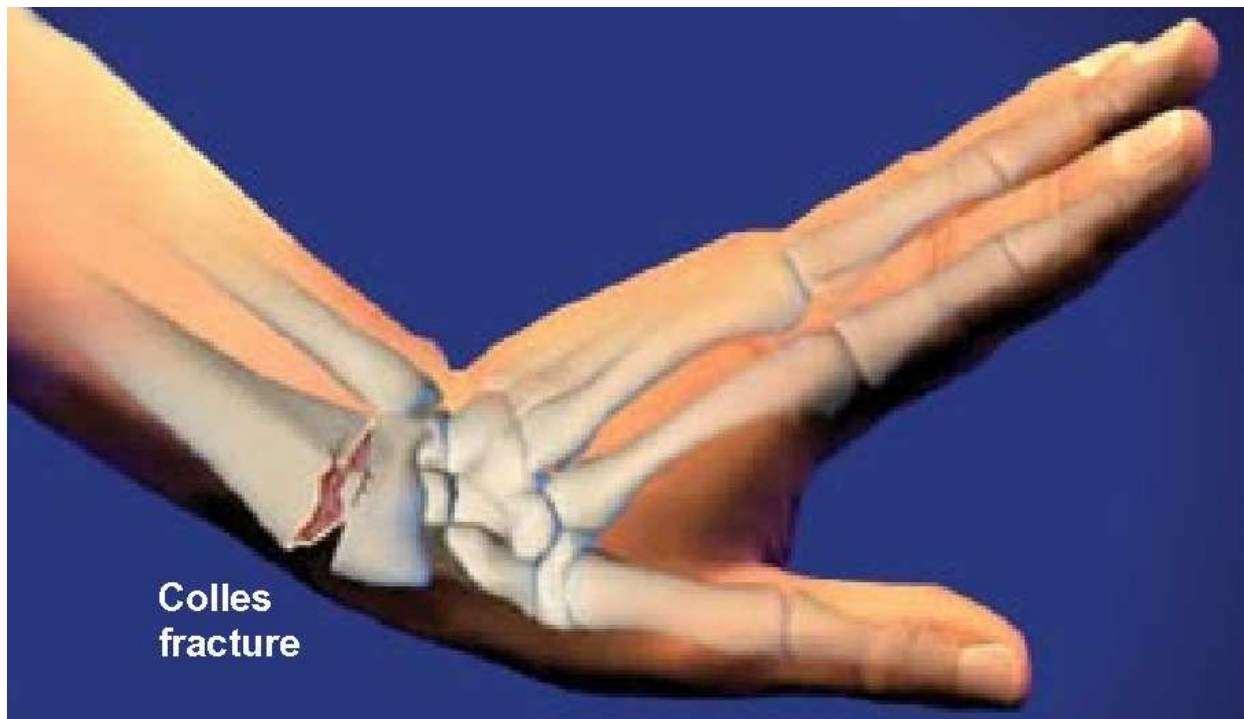
A Colles fracture occurs when one or both of the forearm bones (the radius and ulna) breaks just above the wrist. This fracture most often happens when one tries to break a forward fall.

Breaking a Fall

A person who falls forward usually tries to break the fall by extending the hands and arms to lessen the impact of hitting the ground.

The Fracture

The force caused by combining the pressure of hitting the ground and supporting body weight can cause the forearm bones to break just above the wrist. This is known as a Colles fracture, also called a buckle fracture.



Symptoms

Colles fractures typically cause pain and swelling just above the wrist and make it difficult or impossible for the injured person to hold or lift heavy objects.

Treatment

Nonsurgical treatment options include immobilization by a cast or splint, with recovery lasting from six to twelve months. Colles fractures that cause bone fragments or splintering will require surgery. Open reduction and internal fixation (ORIF) surgery uses screws, pins, and plates to hold the bones together so they remain aligned and can heal.