

**From the Desk of John S. Taras, MD  
A New Approach to Treat Wrist Fractures**



A senior citizen takes a spill on an icy sidewalk on her way to a knitting supply store. A student athlete takes a big hit on the playing field. A construction worker slips from a platform on the job. Three people from different walks of life - so, what do they have in common? They've all fractured a wrist while trying to break their falls. Previous treatments to hold reset bones while they heal were not always successful and often lead to displacement, improper healing, and even disability. The good news is now there is a surgical procedure shown to improve healing results and shorten recovery time,

enabling these individuals and others like them to return to their usual activities faster than ever before.

John S. Taras, MD, of The Philadelphia Hand Center, and Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, and Director of the Division of Hand Surgery at Drexel University College of Medicine/Hahnemann Hospital, developed the T-Pin®, new type of threaded pin - and a minimally invasive procedure designed specifically to treat acute wrist fracture. The T-Pin® Distal Radius Fixation System involves creating small incisions at the wrist and inserting two threaded variable-length pins, which act like screws to gain proper connection of bone fragments. The driver portion of the pin easily breaks away manually, eliminating the need to use other tools, which could disturb the implants once they are in place. The remaining portion of the pins can even stay in place after the fracture has healed, although they can be removed if the patient wishes. According to Dr. Taras, the T-Pin® procedure effectively restores 60 - 80% of wrist motion by three months, and over 90% of normal motion by one year after the surgery. The successful results of this groundbreaking technique are a marked improvement on other options to treat broken wrists. Casts are the traditional fix for fractures, but they don't always hold bones in place and can lead to crooked healing and disability. External stabilizers have also been used, but they are bulky and prevent movement. Plates and screws also can result in shortcomings in movement and cause tendon discomfort. Dr. Taras further explains why the T-Pin® is a more stable alternative to the smooth pins hand surgeons have more commonly used. Dr. Taras points out that although smooth types of pins are easy to implant with a drill, they often do not properly attach to the bone, leading to displacement. The T-Pin® procedure also reduces the operating time in half. Other advantages for patients include needing only local anesthesia, which can be beneficial for medically unstable patients and allowing for early active range of motion. With less surgical trauma, physical therapy can start right away returning patients to functional activities from 4-6 weeks earlier than with casts or traditional implants. Improving patient outcomes is the main goal, but there are economic benefits to the technique as well. The procedure is about one-third of the cost of more invasive fixation correction methods, and because injured workers can return to their jobs earlier, millions of dollars in lost wages may be saved.

Modernizing science is no easy process. Dr. Taras founded his own medical device company, Union Surgical, to produce the T-Pin®. Working with implant engineers, prototypes were developed and tested to prove safety standards were met in order to obtain patents and FDA approval. The entire development process took about four to five years to complete. In the three years that have followed, Dr. Taras has not only performed the procedure 200 times, but he also continually educates other surgeons on its merits as well. The teaching includes seminars, training sessions, bioskills labs and product demonstrations to orthopaedic and hand surgery communities across the country. The results speak for themselves. To date, Dr. Taras has only seen a few cases with complications. With the T-Pin®, Dr. Taras's goals are to maximize the patients' comfort and get them back in shape to return to their jobs or whatever activities they love to do.

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