

Injuries of the Elbow

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

Introduction

The doctor has diagnosed you as having a fracture or a soft tissue injury. This information leaflet has been written to help you manage this injury at home. An appointment may also be arranged for you to see a physiotherapist.

Have you been told you have a fracture?

A fracture (or a break) is damage to a bone. This may be a small chip of bone or a complete break through the bone.

How are fractures treated?

Fractures may be treated in a number of ways:

- Plaster cast
- Internal fixation is when the fracture is fixed with nails, plates, screws, or wires
- External fixation is when nails are placed into the bone with a metal plate outside to hold the bone still while the fracture heals
- Reduction in theatre – the bone is put into a good position. This is often followed by one of the above treatments.

Some fractures are not treated in any of the ways outlined above. They may be managed with a sling, splint, brace, or tubular bandage and you may be encouraged to begin exercising as soon as possible.

Have you been told you have a soft tissue injury?

This includes sprains, strains, and bruises which affect the soft tissues of the body. Most commonly injured are the ligaments, muscles, tendons, and joint capsules. Following a fracture the soft tissues will also have been injured.

There is no set time for a fracture or a soft tissue injury to heal. The doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists will give you advice on what you can expect and what you should be doing. You should expect some swelling and discomfort for several weeks.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

How can I manage my injury at home?

The regime of protection, rest, ice, compression, and elevation is a simple and effective method of early treatment, particularly when swelling is present.

- **Protection** – this may include a brace or splint, tubular bandage, or a sling
- **Relative rest** – rest the affected area for the first few days, avoiding excessive activity, using any of the above supports you have been given
- **Ice** – this is effective in reducing pain, inflammation, and swelling. Do not use if the area is numb, you have weeping or bleeding wounds, you are diabetic, or you have problems with your circulation.

There are two methods for using ice:

1. Place ice in a bucket of water and place the affected area in the bucket for 15-20 minutes
2. Wrap crushed ice/frozen peas in a damp tea towel to make an ice pack. Cover the affected area with oil to protect the skin and place the ice pack over the area for 15-20 minutes (10 minutes if this is a bony area).

If you have a burning sensation or notice any blistering, remove the ice immediately.

- **Compression** – this is used to reduce swelling. If you have been given a tubular bandage, wear this whenever the injured area is not elevated and always remove it before you go to bed
- **Elevation** – this helps to reduce swelling and inflammation. Elevate the injured area as much as possible in the first few days, this should be done for at least 20 minutes every two hours.

Do not use compression when elevating the injured area.

For the first three days DO NOT apply heat, massage the injury, or drink alcohol as these activities may increase bleeding or swelling.

Should I take pain relief?

Your doctor or pharmacist can advise on appropriate pain relief which, if taken regularly, can improve comfort and reduce muscle spasms. If your pain is well controlled you will manage exercises more easily which will aid recovery.

Can I drive?

Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise you when it is safe to return to driving. You must be in full control of the vehicle before attempting to drive again. You should not drive whilst wearing a cast, brace, or sling.

Why exercise?

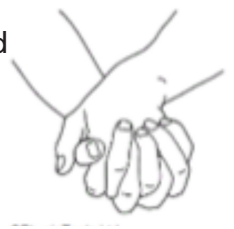
Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness. Too much movement or the wrong type of exercise however may be harmful to tissue healing and it may cause inflammation which can increase your pain. If you are not sure if it is safe to do something please talk to your physiotherapist first.

Exercises – to be completed 3-5 times a day

Grasp the wrist of the arm you want to exercise. Bend your elbow and assist the movement with your other hand. Straighten your elbow. Repeat 5-10 times.



Clasp your hands together and support your forearms on a table. Put the back of one hand on the table and then turn your hands and put the back of the other hand on the table. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand. Bend your elbow and then straighten your elbow. Repeat 10 times.



Stand with your elbow bent and palm turned down. Turn your palm up and down rotating your forearm. Repeat 10 times.



Sit or stand. Place your hands on a table. Gently slide your hands forwards and back along the table as far as is comfortable. Repeat 5-10 times.



Support the wrist of the hand to be exercised. Bend your wrist and assist the movement with your other hand. Then straighten your wrist and assist the movement with your other hand. Repeat 5-10 times.



Wrist and fingers straight. Make a fist. Repeat 5-10 times.



Other exercises to progress to:

Straighten your fingers and bend your wrist back with your other hand. Straighten your elbow. Hold 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



Place your upper arm on a support and straighten your elbow. You can increase the stretch by holding light weight. Hold 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



Lean against a wall with straight arms. Slowly slide your hands down until you can feel the stretch on the inside of your forearm. Hold 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



Sit or stand holding a light weight. Bend and straighten the elbow. Repeat 10 times.



Sit or stand holding a light weight. Bring the arm to be exercised up with the elbow pointing to the ceiling. Support the elbow with the other hand. Straighten the arm holding the weight. Repeat 10 times.



Stand with one elbow bent and palm turned up. Hold a light weight. Turn your palm down rotating your forearm. Repeat 10 times.



Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall. Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line. Repeat 5-10 times.



Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports.

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury and you do not have a further appointment with the physiotherapy team, please contact the physiotherapy department on the telephone number below.

Contact details

The team is available Monday to Friday, 8.00 16.00. Outside of these hours please contact the Emergency Department or, if you have a fracture, the Fracture Clinic. For both of these options please ring 01902 307999 and ask the operator to put you through to the appropriate department.

Acute Trauma Physiotherapy Team

Emergency Department
New Cross Hospital
01902 307999 Ext. 8536

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。