

## Children's Physiotherapy Service Patient Information

### Elbow fractures

#### What is an Elbow fracture?



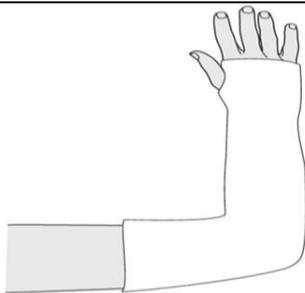
An elbow fracture, is a partial or complete break or crack in the bones of the upper arm (humerus) or lower arm (radius and ulna). This usually happens if you fall onto an outstretched hand.

#### Symptoms



- Extreme elbow pain
- Stiffness in elbow
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Deformity
- Numbness or weakness in the arm, wrist and hand

#### Initial treatment



Your child will be seen by the orthopaedic or fracture clinic team who will discuss treatment. This is usually a cast up to four weeks.

#### After initial treatment and cast removal

<p><b>Rest</b></p> 	<p>Avoid any painful activities such as heavy lifting for the first couple of weeks.</p>
<p><b>Ice</b></p> 	<p><b>Use ice for up to 20 minutes every 2-3 hours:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use an ice pack or bag of frozen vegetables</li> <li>• Wrap in a damp towel</li> <li>• You can refreeze refreeze the vegetables and use again <b>but do not eat.</b></li> <li>• Do not leave on whilst sleeping</li> </ul>
<p><b>Medication</b></p> 	<p>Your child may need pain relief to allow your child to start moving and using their arm again.</p> <p><b>Speak to a pharmacist.</b> They may suggest: Pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen for pain and swelling.</p>
<p><b>Exercises for the first 2-4 weeks</b></p>	
	<p>Complete these 2 exercises three times a day This will help your child's elbow be less stiff, weak and reduce pain and swelling</p>
<p><b>Exercise 1, bending the elbow:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to bend the elbow as much as you can to bring the hand to the shoulder</li> <li>• Get your child to gently help this movement using the other hand</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do not force</b></li> <li>• Hold for a few seconds and slowly lower</li> </ul> <p>Do this 10-15 times slowly and repeat 1-2 times.</p>
<p><b>Exercise 2, straightening the elbow:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to straighten the elbow as much as you can to bring the hand to the shoulder.</li> <li>• Get your child to gently help this movement using the other hand</li> <li>• <b>Do not force</b></li> <li>• Hold for a few seconds and slowly lower</li> <li>• Do this 10-15 times slowly and repeat 1-2 times</li> </ul>
<p><b>Using the arm in all activities</b></p>	<p>Encourage your child to use the injured arm in all activities. This includes washing, dressing, eating, cutting, writing etc.</p>

## Activity and sports



- Your child should continue to be at school
- You should tell your child's school they have broken or fractured their elbow
- They can return to some sports and PE as comfort allows
- Be cautious with any high-risk activities for the first 2-3 months after the fracture to allow full healing. Examples: activities such as running or monkey bar. This is because there is a small-risk falling on to the injured arm again
- It may take 6-8 weeks to get better and return to all sport and activities.

### How long will it take for the elbow to get better?

Most elbow fractures get better in 12 weeks. However it can take up to 48-weeks for the full movement to return in your child's elbow.

This is due to the normal bone re-modelling after a fracture and on-going growing of the bones in your child's arm.

### Further advice



### If after 12 weeks after removal of the cast your child has problems with:

- Using their injured arm in all activities or sports
- Unable to 80-90% of the



	<p>movement back in the arm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant pain limiting movement and use of the arm</li><li>• Any change to the feeling in the arm such as pins and needles</li></ul> <p>Weight-bearing and walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worsening pain or swelling</li></ul> <p>Please contact orthopaedics at Southend Hospital, or GP for further advice and Physiotherapy referral.</p>
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