

Clavicle fractures in children – discharge advice

Information for parents and carers

During your child's visit to the emergency department, you were advised they have a clavicle fracture, more commonly known as a fractured collar bone. This leaflet answers frequently asked questions about this type of injury.

What is a clavicle fracture?

Your child has suffered a break in their collar bone. The only treatment required is painkillers and a sling.

How long does it take to recover?

This type of fracture is common in children and heals well. The injury is usually painful for four to six weeks and a bump over the fracture site is normal and is produced by healing bone. It may take up to a year for this to disappear. For children older than 10 years of age, a small bump may remain.

Recovery plan

24-72 hours since injury

Your child should wear the sling for comfort to rest the arm. It might be more comfortable for them to sleep sitting upright. Make sure your child takes their arm out of the sling and moves the shoulder and arm as pain allows; please see exercises one, two and three below and start as pain allows.

Please follow the advice on pain relief given by the clinician your child saw in the emergency department. If you need further advice, please ask your local pharmacist or GP.

Zero to two or three weeks since injury

Your child can continue to wear the sling for comfort. They can stop using the sling when they feel able to.

Four to six weeks since injury

Please help your child to start shoulder flexion exercises (exercise four).

Exercises to follow

Please note, the number of times your child needs to carry out each exercise is included as a guide only. If they experience a significant amount of pain while carrying them out, you should reduce the number of times they do each exercise, and gradually increase the amount during their recovery.

Repeat each of these exercises 10 times, three to four times per day.

1. Bend and straighten the elbow.



2. Keep the elbow by side and turn palm of hand up and down.



3. Stand upright with arms relaxed by side. Bring shoulders back and squeeze shoulder blades together.



4. Use your unaffected hand to lift your arm up in front of you as shown in the pictures.



Return to sport

Your child may resume non-contact sports such as swimming after six weeks but should avoid full or limited-contact sports such as football, rugby, or basketball for 10 weeks. If they are still unable to return to sports after this time or you need further guidance, please see your GP, and ask for a physiotherapy referral.

What happens next?

We do not routinely follow up patients with this type of injury as it usually heals well. However, if your child still experiencing significant symptoms after six weeks, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital they first visited.

This clinic is run by a team of physiotherapists and orthopaedic doctors who can review your child's scans and notes to provide you with the further information or support that your child may need. If appropriate, they will make an appointment for your child to be seen face-to-face in a fracture clinic.

Contact details

Barnet Hospital, Chase Farm Hospital, Finchley Memorial Hospital, Edgware Community Hospital, Cheshunt Community Hospital

- Telephone: 020 8216 4445 (9am to 12noon, Monday to Friday)
- Email: rf-tr.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net

Royal Free Hospital

- Telephone: 020 7472 6222 (9am to 12noon, Monday to Friday, a voicemail message can be left outside of these hours)
- Email: rf-tr.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net

Acknowledgement and references

We would like to thank Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Leeds Teaching Hospitals for allowing us to reproduce part of their leaflets. If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email: rf-tr.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net or rf-tr.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net.

More information

For more information about the virtual fracture clinic service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website: www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/trauma-and-orthopaedics/virtual-fracture-clinic/

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net.

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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