

Elbow Fractures (broken elbow)

Information for Patients



This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about elbow fractures pain and what you can do to help with your recovery.

What is an elbow fracture?

Firstly, a fracture is the same as a break. The word fracture is a medical term and a break is more of a common term to describe an injury to a bone that has caused it to break.

There are many different types of fractures; they all essentially mean the same thing i.e. that one or more of the bones in your elbow have been broken.

What are the common symptoms?

Pain: Elbow fractures can potentially be really quite sore. It is very normal for your elbow, upper arm or even down to your wrist to be sore after a fracture and it is just as normal for that soreness to still be there for some time afterwards (weeks possibly into months).

Swelling: After an elbow fracture, it is very likely for you to notice swelling. You may find the swelling lasts for a long time (possibly into months) and may even still be there when the pain has settled and you are feeling better.

Stiffness: Whilst your elbow is sore and swollen, you can expect to find that movement will be difficult. Once you are ready or have been told to by the hospital or your physio, it is important to get your elbow moving as soon as you feel that you can as this will make sure your recovery is started nice and early.

When will my elbow be healed?

Fractures typically heal within about 6-8 weeks. There are things that might influence this such as any pre-existing health conditions like diabetes or if you smoke, but typically once you pass the 6-8 weeks timescale, you can consider your elbow healed.

What can I do to help myself?

Trust it: After an elbow fracture, you might not feel confident to use your elbow; you may feel that it will let you down or that you might injure it again. This is extremely normal and might take a little while to improve. It is hoped that the information on this page will help you understand what is normal after an elbow fracture and help you to start to trust your arm again.

Start using it: Your arm is designed to be used, therefore it is important to try and get it going as soon as you can (in some cases this has to be once the hospital has said they are happy for you to do so). It is likely to be sore but you will not make it worse by using it, in fact it will help your arm start to get better more effectively. You may need to adjust how you use your arm or how long you do things for in the first stages, but it is something that improves over time for most people.

Will it get better?

For most people, an elbow fracture will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to be better. It is difficult to predict how long or how smooth or how full your recovery might be, but by understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about elbow fractures or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

Search online: [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'elbow fractures'

Exercises



Standing or sitting. Bend your elbow and using your other hand try to increase the bend.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



Sitting with your fingers together, elbows bent and your hand over the edge of a table/ your lap. Turn your hands over and back again trying to keep your elbows bent. Try to keep the forearm of the arm you wish to exercise down on the table/lap throughout.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



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