

Care of shoulder fracture (proximal humerus)

Patient Information

Community REACT team



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Introduction

You have broken (also known as fractured) your arm at the top of the long bone (called the Humerus), near to the shoulder joint. This leaflet provides you with information on how to look after your arm, advise you on how to keep your unaffected joints moving and help you to know when to seek help or advice.

Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding injury, or whether or not you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your GP or Physiotherapist prior to commencing any exercises shown here.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and does not have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown here are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference; they are not exhaustive and can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

How to Manage your Fracture (Break)

You will have been given a sling to help to support your arm. The type of sling you will have been given depends on your type of injury. The most common ones are collar and cuff but there are various types of shoulder immobilisers or broad arm slings. The collar and cuff is a figure of eight bandage which fits around your neck and keeps your forearm supported whilst still allowing your elbow to hang without support. The broad arm, triangular type of sling, fits around your neck and supports your elbow and forearm. Some of the shoulder immobilisers also have a strap which fits around the body to prevent any movement occurring at the shoulder and are quite often worn underneath clothing. You should be given specific instructions by your health care professional for the type of sling provided and the length of time it is to be used.

Your arm may become swollen, progressively stiff, painful, and bruised. This is quite normal but for you to keep the mobility in your joints which have not been affected by the fracture, it is important that you take pain killers as prescribed by your doctor. You will also need to remove the sling from your forearm to attend to your personal hygiene (see advice below).

Unless told otherwise by your Physiotherapist or Health Care Professional it will be beneficial to perform the following exercises to keep your neck, elbow, wrist, hand, and finger joints moving.

Exercises to keep your joints moving

You should try to do the exercises at least 4 times a day, more frequently if for example your joints feel stiff or painful because you have not moved them.

Neck

Sitting upright, in a chair or bed (Repeat these exercises 5 times).

- Turn your head only to look over your shoulder, hold for 5 seconds, and repeat to the opposite side.
- Tilt your neck, taking your ear towards your shoulders, whilst continuing to look straight ahead. Hold for 1 to 2 seconds and repeat to the opposite side.
- Take your chin down towards your chest, hold for 5 seconds.
- Look up towards the ceiling.

DO NOT ROLL YOUR NECK

Elbow (Repeat these exercises 5 times).

Remove your sling from your wrist without moving your shoulder.

- Keeping your elbow tucked into your side. Bend and straighten your elbow as fully as possible. If this exercise is too painful you may need to support your elbow with your other hand or ask someone else to do this for you.
- In the same position turn the palm of your hand to face upwards towards the ceiling and then repeat by turning your palm to face the floor.

Wrist (Repeat these exercises 5 times)

You can try these exercises whilst wearing your sling or without it on.

- Try making a fist then move your wrist up and down.
- Move your wrist from side to side
- Make a circle with your wrist.

Fingers

- Try to touch the tip of each finger with your thumb.
- Try making a very tight fist and then spread your fingers as far apart as possible.

Maintaining your personal hygiene

To maintain your personal hygiene you will need to remove your sling and any clothing and leave your arm hanging down by your side (**unless you have been instructed otherwise**). You can then lean to the side which is broken so that your arm moves away from your body. This will give you enough space to reach into your underarm area to both wash effectively and to dress your affected arm.

When dressing, it is advised that you dress the broken arm first and undress it last to avoid movement of your shoulder.

What to look out for and when to seek advice

Please seek advice if you notice any loss of sensation in your arm, feelings of pins and needles or notice any change in colour to your hand and / or fingers i.e. white or blue which may be caused by altered blood supply. Please remember bruising is quite normal and can sometimes cover the full length of your arm, hand, and fingers.

Any concerns please contact our fracture clinic on 01942 822109 or your health care professional named below:

Name: Tel No:

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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