

# Radial Head Fracture

Information and advice for patients

## Physiotherapy

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### Your Injury

You have a small break in the radial head or neck - one of the bones in your elbow. These fractures are a common injury and heal well with time and use. No specific treatment or follow-up is necessary. We would expect you to return to normal function within 6-8 weeks of your injury.

The usual symptoms following this type of fracture include:

- Pain straight after an injury
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Difficulty moving the elbow or forearm

### Your Treatment Plan

A sling will support your elbow for up to 2 weeks. Wear the sling during the day but remove it for exercises and personal hygiene.

As your pain improves, you will be able to move your arm more comfortably. These fractures almost always heal well with time and therefore follow up appointments are not always needed.

It is important to gently exercise your elbow to increase the range of movement right away. Moving your elbow will not stop the fracture healing. We have included some exercises to help you. You should do the exercises several times a day.

### What Should I Do at Home?

- Use over the counter pain killers as required.
- Elevate the injured arm in a sling or on pillows at night.
- Use ice over the injured area to help with pain and swelling – an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel can be used for 10 minutes at a time.
- You should not drive whilst in a sling.
- You can return to work once you are able to do your normal duties.

## How Long Will It Take to Heal?

Most fractures heal without any problems in six to twelve weeks. However, it may take several months for your symptoms to settle – these can include pain or discomfort, stiffness, decreased strength, and swelling. The bone may take longer to heal if you suffer from diabetes or if you smoke.

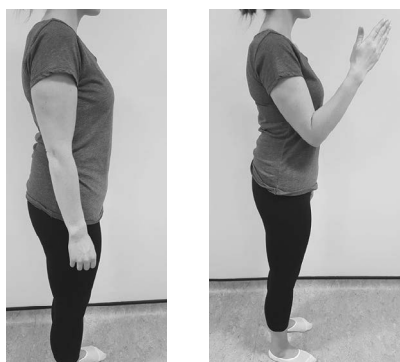
For advice on stopping smoking please visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) or discuss this with your GP.

## Exercises

You should try to do these exercises 3 to 4 times a day. You can start them immediately.

**Repeat these ten times each:**

1. Gently bend your elbow as far as you can, hold for 5-10 seconds, then gently straighten elbow as far as you can.



2. Whilst sitting or standing, turn your palm upwards and then downwards ensuring your elbow is tucked into your side.



3. In sitting, support your forearm on a towel with palm facing downward and move your hand up and down without lifting your forearm.



## Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting the exercises in this leaflet, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding your injury, or whether you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your GP or physiotherapist before beginning any exercises shown in this leaflet.

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

The exercise plans shown in this leaflet are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference. They can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

If you have any worries or concerns please contact the Fracture Clinic: 0121 507 3120

## Sources used for information in this leaflet

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Incorporating the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, City Health Campus, Sandwell Health Campus and Rowley Regis Hospital.

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ML7415

Issue Date: May 2025

Review Date: May 2028