

# Discharge advice following a radial head or neck fracture of the elbow

## Patient Information

### What is my injury?

The elbow joint is made up of three bones: - the radial head, the olecranon and the humerus. There are also ligaments and tendons which provide support to the joint.



Head



Neck

You have a small break (fracture) to the radial head or neck. (See pictures above). Sometimes this is not apparent on the x-ray and the only injury seen is a small amount of fluid (effusion) in the joint on the x-ray. The treatment of the injury is the same.

### How is my injury treated?

These fractures almost always heal well with time and use. No specific treatment is required but a sling can hold your elbow in a comfortable position for a few days.

You should gradually stop using the sling as your pain settles and aim to remove the sling completely as soon as you can. You may initially require regular pain killers as it is important to keep gently moving the elbow before gradually resuming daily activities. This will reduce stiffness and help to ensure the quickest return to normal function.

Forcible stretching is unnecessary and may cause pain as well as delay your recovery.

## How long does it take to recover?

Symptoms including bruising, stiffness and pain in the elbow start getting better from three to six weeks, but mild symptoms can persist for longer and may take several months to settle.

## Are there any long-term problems following this injury?

There may be slightly reduced movement at the elbow, especially on straightening it, but this is unlikely to affect your function.

## When to seek further help

If you are still having problems after six weeks, please telephone the Virtual Fracture Clinic for further advice.

## Virtual Fracture Clinic

Leighton Hospital

Tel: **01270 278383** Email: [virtualfractureclinic@mcht.nhs.uk](mailto:virtualfractureclinic@mcht.nhs.uk)

Available Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm (excluding Bank Holidays)

For more information about the Virtual Fracture Clinic visit:  
[www.mcht.nhs.uk/virtualfractureclinic](http://www.mcht.nhs.uk/virtualfractureclinic)

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

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