

# Soft Tissue Elbow Injury (No fracture)

## Patient Information

MSK Therapy Service



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:  
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

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## 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 doesn't 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.

## Injury to the Elbow

Injuries to the elbow are common. It is not always possible or necessary to make a firm diagnosis. A clinician has reviewed your injury, and x-rays (if one was necessary) and has stated that there is no fracture (break) to the bone. It is possible that you have injured the soft tissues around the elbow. This may be muscles, ligament, or the capsule that surrounds the joint.

This type of injury can result in a painful, stiff elbow, sometimes with swelling or bruising. Soft tissue injuries usually improve on their own without any specific treatment. It can take time for your elbow to return to full function.

## Advice

### Exercise

It is important to keep your elbow moving, and to slowly increase the movement. We have included some exercises to help you gain movement. You should do the exercises several times per day. It helps to watch the elbow crease (line on the front of the elbow), to check that your elbow is moving. When elbows are sore or stiff, the shoulder or wrist often moves instead of the elbow; by watching the crease, you can make sure it is the elbow that is moving.

### Function

You should be guided by your symptoms. Rest your elbow when it is sore and use it for light function as comfortable.




### General Advice

You can use over the counter painkillers to ease any discomfort, and to help you return to normal function.

Some patients find that ice packs help with the pain and swelling. You should only apply an ice pack to skin if the skin has normal sensation, and the skin is not broken, damaged or cut. Always place a damp towel on your skin before the ice pack and check the skin regularly for signs of ice burn, such as excessive redness, other change in the skin's colour, or blistering. Apply for no longer than 15-20 minutes.

A single layer of elastic sleeve bandage, eg. Tubigrip may help you to regain movement. This should not be tight. It should be used only during the day. You should remove it if your fingers change colour or have altered sensation.

## Exercises

<b>Overhead Extension</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie on your back.</li> <li>• Raise your arm up so that your upper arm is pointing up towards the ceiling.</li> <li>• Hold it in position with your other hand (see picture).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping your upper arm still, slowly relax your elbow, so that it bends, and your hand moves towards your head.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping your upper arm still, slowly straighten your elbow, so that your hand points towards the ceiling.</li> </ul> <p>Repeat this exercise frequently throughout the day. It should not cause pain. You may feel that the exercise eases any discomfort that you have. Ideally you should exercise your elbow every 1-2 hours.</p>

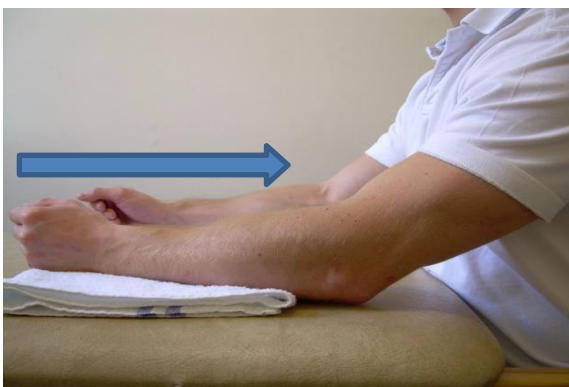
## Table Slides



- Sit at a table or stand at the kitchen work-top
- Rest your hands on a towel (with your palms facing inwards)



- Watching your elbow crease, slide the towel forwards with both hands
- Only go forwards whilst your elbow is moving
- Pause



- Return by sliding your elbows and hands back, watching the crease
- As you feel more comfortable, as you pull your elbows back towards you, you can lean your body forwards over your elbows. This will help them bend further

## Rotation Exercise



- Stand with your elbows flexed and tucked into your side, hands in front



- Slowly rotate both palms to face up
- Slowly rotate both palms to face down

## Wall Slides



- Stand close to a wall, facing the wall.
- Place both hands on a towel (not shown) on the wall. You can grip the towel if this is easier.



- Slowly slide the towel up the wall with both hands. Only slide when your elbow crease is moving.
- Once your elbow crease stops moving, pause and raise your heels up to stand on your tip toes – as if you were trying to reach something from a high shelf. Pause and then lower your heels.



- Slide your hands down on the towel by tucking in your elbows.
- You can gain more elbow bend by standing closer to the wall as your arms lower.

## Further advice

You must get in touch with the fracture clinic if:

- You experience any locking (elbow getting stuck in one position)
- You experience ongoing wobbliness or clumsiness.
- Your pain persists or gets worse despite taking pain killers.
- Your wound become increasingly red, hot, painful or discharge is visible.

We would expect you to be returning to normal function within 4 weeks after your injury, though some people may take 6-8 weeks.

If your symptoms are not improving or you have any concerns, please contact one of the following:

**Fracture Clinic Physiotherapy Team:** 01942 822103

**Fracture Clinic Nursing Team:** 01942 822109

Monday to Friday 8am until 5pm.

If you are over 16, you can also now self-refer into Physiotherapy by ringing any of the departments below:

**Boston House Health Centre** Telephone 01942 482260

**Leigh Infirmary** Telephone 01942 483413

**Platt Bridge Health Centre** Telephone 01942 482403

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## 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  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan  
WN1 2NN

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## 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?



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## 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.

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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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