



Wrightington, Wigan and
Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Radial Head Fracture

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Patient Information

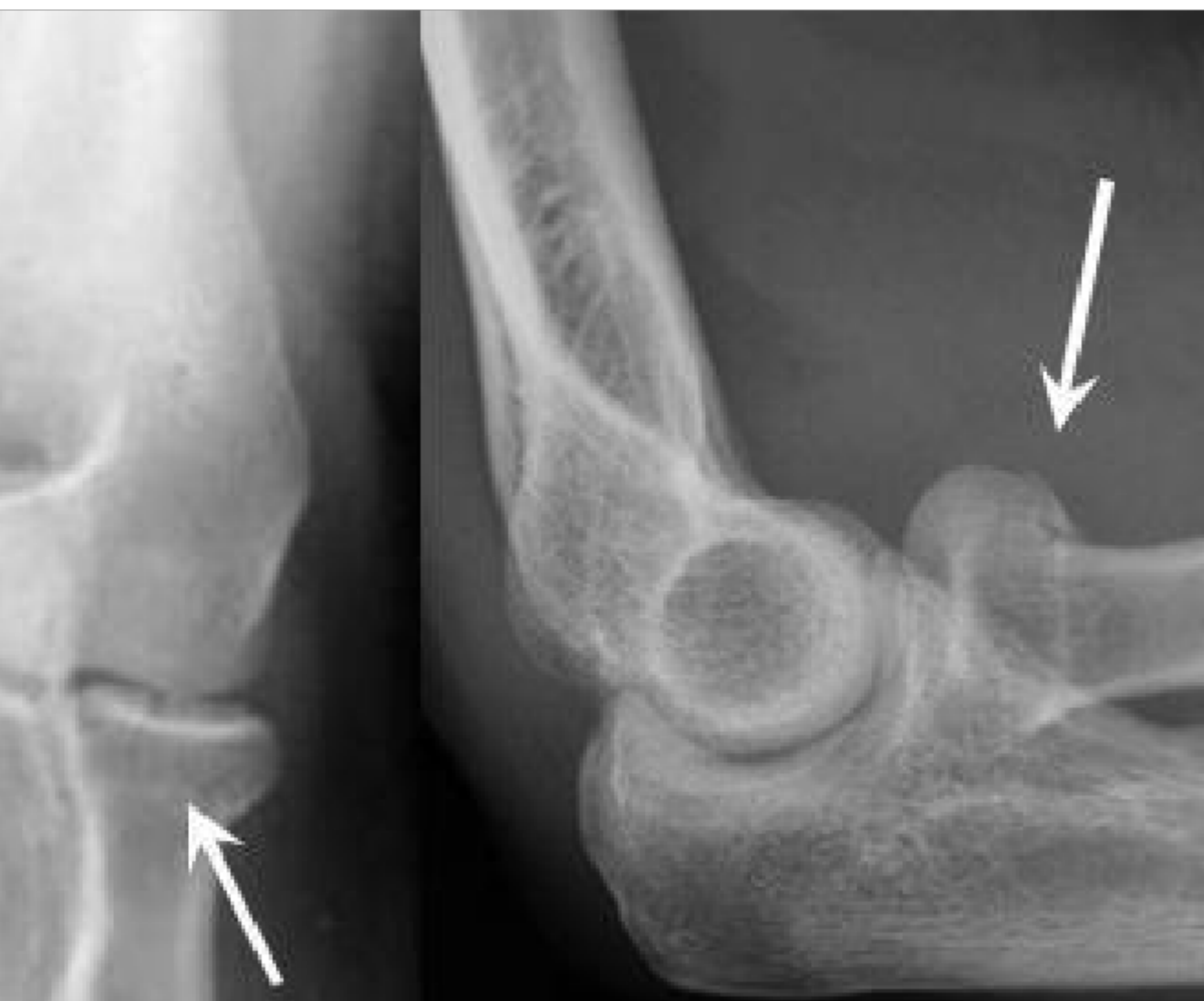
Trauma & Orthopaedics Department

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Introduction

You have a very 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.



Exercise

A sling will support your elbow for up to 2 weeks, but it is important to exercise your elbow to increase the range of movement gently 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.

It is important that you do not allow your shoulder, wrist, and hand to become stiff, and it is safe to move these joints throughout the day. This will help reduce swelling too.

General Advice

When your arm is in the sling or resting on pillows, have the hand slightly higher than the elbow.

Discard the sling as soon as comfortable.

Simple painkillers e.g. paracetamol can help you return to normal function.

Using ice can help with your pain and swelling. You should only apply an ice pack to skin with normal sensation, and if the skin is not broken, damaged or cut. Always wrap the ice in a damp towel and check the skin regularly for signs of ice burn, such as excessive change in the skin's colour, or blistering.

Smoking slows down healing. We advise that you stop (at least whilst recovering from your injury), speak to your General Practitioner (GP) or you can go online at <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>.

Exercises

Overhead Extension



- Lie on your back
- Raise your injured arm towards the ceiling, with your hand near the ceiling
- Hold it in position for 30 seconds



- Keeping your arm straight, relax your elbow and your hand towards your head.



- Keeping your arm straighten your hand points to

Table Slides

- Sit at a table or work-top



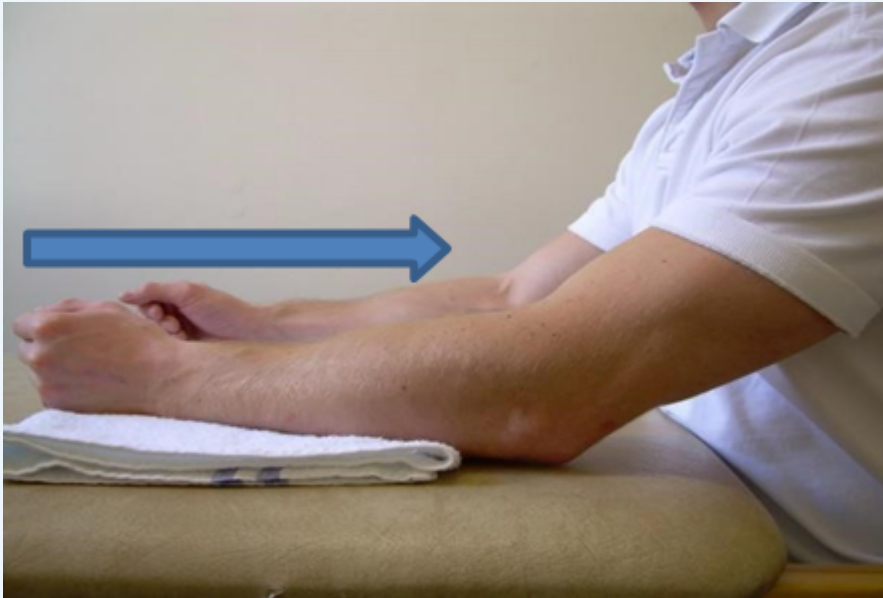
- Rest your hands on the towel with your palms facing each other



- Watching your hands as you slide the towel forward
- Only go forward slowly and moving

- Pause

- Return by sliding your hands back, with your palms facing each other



- As you feel muscle fatigue, you can pull your hands towards you, and at the same time, lean your body over your elbows to help them bend.

Rotation Exercise



- Stand with your feet together and your arms tucked into your sides.

- Slowly rotate your torso to the right.



- Slowly rotate
down

Wall Slides

- Stand close to



- Place both hands (as shown) on the towel if this is



- Slowly slide the towel up with both hands. Check for a crease at the elbow.
- Once your hands are at the top, stop moving, pause for 30 seconds – as if you are holding something from the ceiling and then lower



- Slide your hands down the wall, tucking in your elbows.
- You can gain more range of motion standing closer to the wall with your arms lower.

Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises in this leaflet, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding your injury, or whether or not 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 exercise 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.

Frequently asked questions

When can I drive?

It is your own responsibility. You are allowed to drive when:

- You can safely control the car
- You are no longer using the sling
- You can perform an emergency stop.

When can I go back to work?

This depends on your individual situation. You can return to work when you feel able to do your job. Consider a phased return if needed/possible.

Further advice

You must get in touch with the fracture clinic if:

- You experience any locking (elbow getting stuck in one position)
- Your pain persists or gets worse, despite taking pain killers.
- Do not forcibly stretch your elbow in the first 6 weeks – this may cause pain and delay healing
- Full recovery may take up to 12 months
- **There is a small risk that you may experience a loss of end range movement at the elbow, especially on straightening it, but this is unlikely to affect your function long term.**

For more information online, please visit <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/virtual-fracture-clinic>

If your Symptoms are not improving or you have any concerns, please contact:

Fracture Clinic: 01942 822595 Monday to Friday 8am until 5pm.

If you have any urgent concerns out of hours, please call 111.

[Adult MSK Physiotherapy Self-Referral](#)

If you are struggling to regain your movement or get back to normal activities, you can self-refer to **Physiotherapy**. A referral form can be found on this webpage:

<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/adult-msk-physiotherapy-self-referral>



Please scan the QR Code to access the website.

Telephone Numbers:

Boston House Health Centre Telephone 03007071113

Leigh Infirmary Telephone 03007071597 / 03007071595

Platt Bridge Health Centre Telephone 03007071772



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