Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Radial Head Fracture

Version number: **7**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Radial Head Fracture

Patient Information

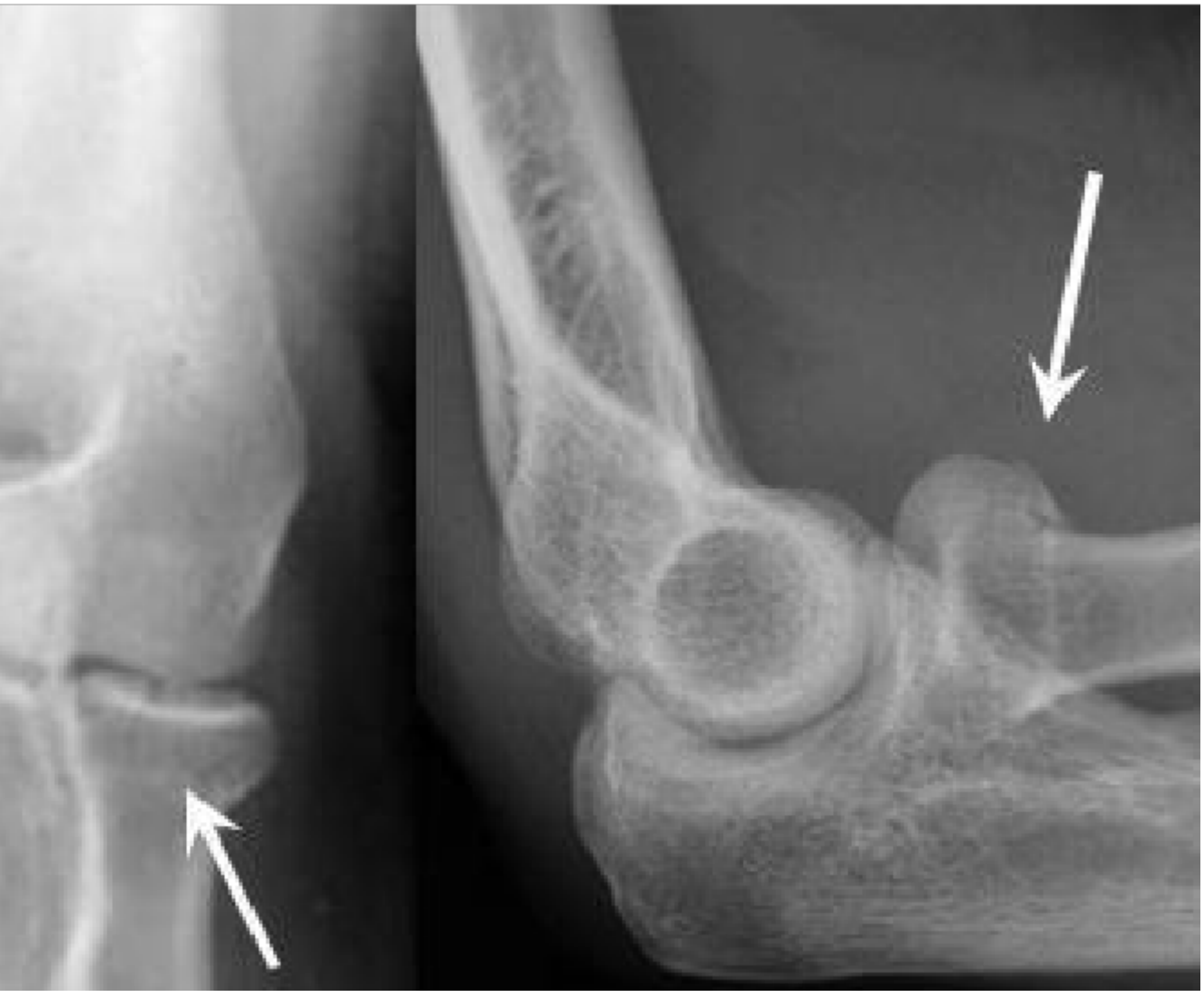
Trauma & Orthopaedics Department

- Author ID: BH/VL
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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 ba
- Raise your inju
  your upper arm
  towards the ce
- Hold it in posit
  hand (see pict



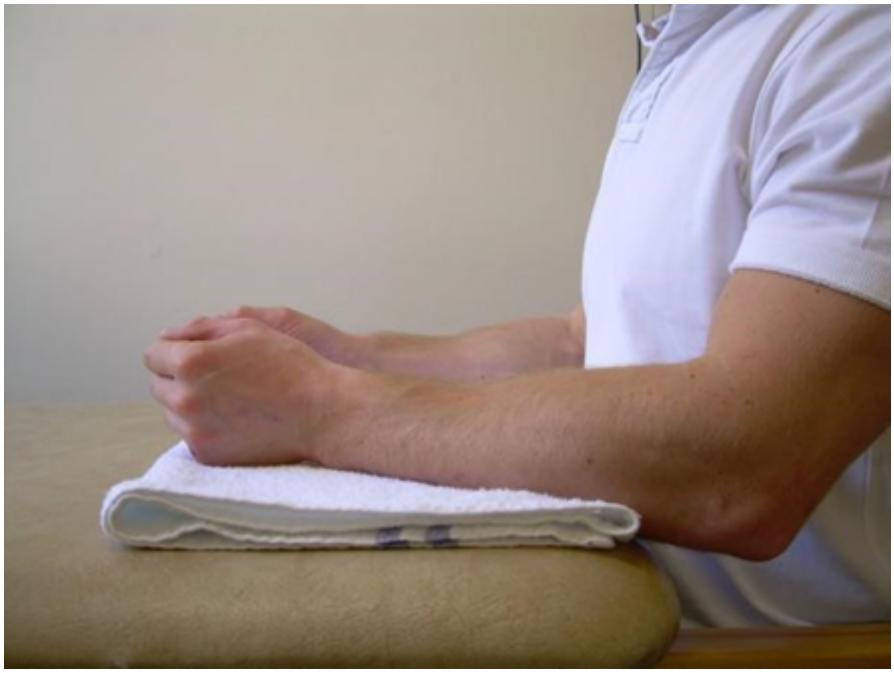
- Keeping your
  relax your elbo
  and your hand
  head.

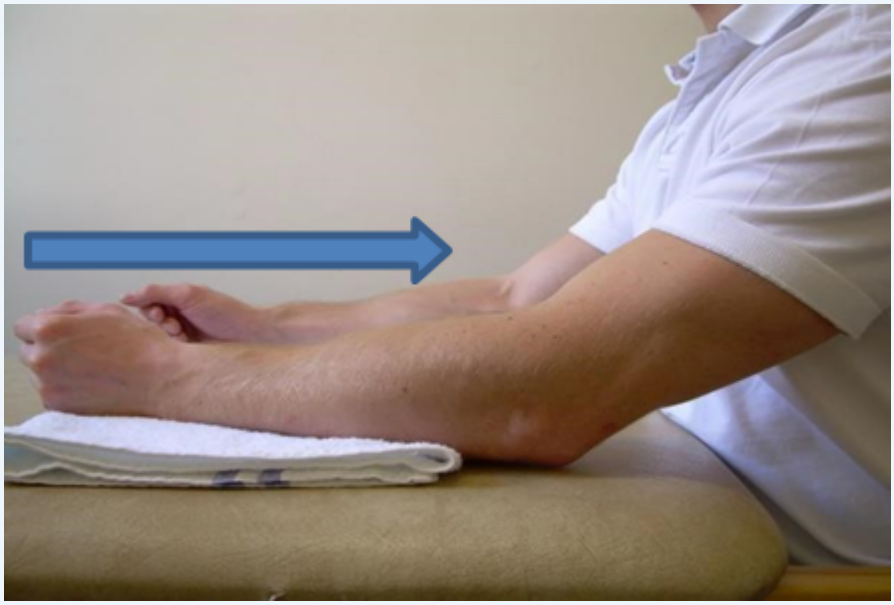


- Keeping your straighten you hand points to

Table Slides

- Sit at a table work-top

	• Rest your hand your palms fac
	• Watching your the towel forwa
	• Only go forwar moving
	• Pause
	• Return by slidi hands back, w



- As you feel mo
  you can pull yo
  towards you, a
  time, lean you
  over your elb
  help them ben

Rotation Exercise



- Stand with you
  tucked into yo

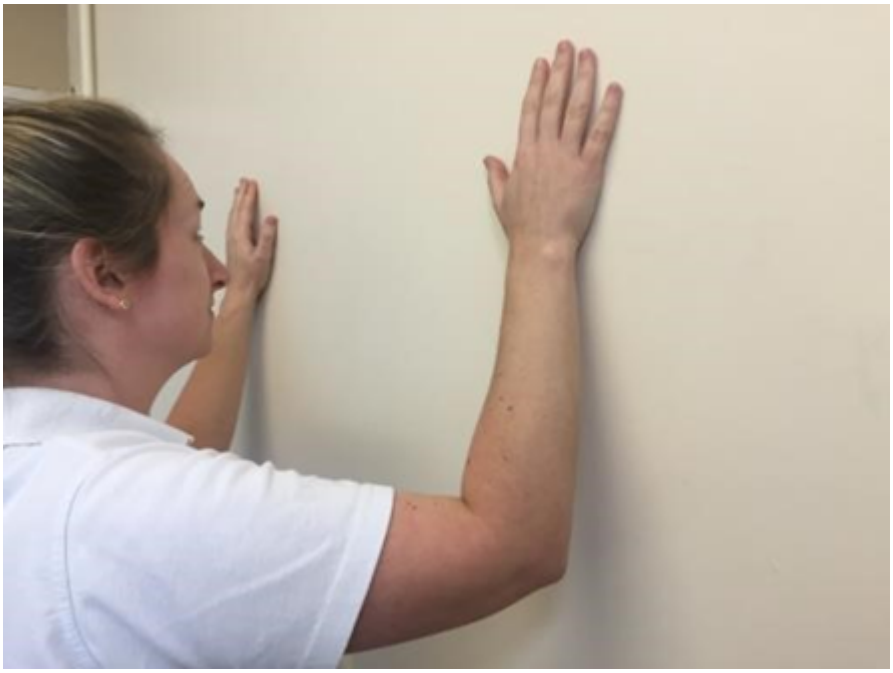
- Slowly rotate



- Slowly rotate
down

Wall Slides

- Stand close to



- Place both ha
shown) on the
towel if this is



- Slowly slide th
both hands. C
elbow crease

- Once your
moving, paus
toes – as if y
something fro
and then lowe



- Slide your har
  tucking in you
- You can gain
  standing close
  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 (8.30am until 5pm.) Please leave an answer message with patient details and we will return your calls.

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 web-page:

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 0300 707 1113

Leigh Infirmary Telephone 0300 707 1597 / 0300 707 1595

Platt Bridge Health Centre Telephone 0300 707 1772



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