Discharge advice: radial head or neck fracture

Information for patients

This sheet answers common questions about radial head or neck fractures. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

You have a very small break in the radial head or neck, which is one of the bones in your elbow.

These fractures almost always heal well with time and use. No specific treatment is required and therefore a routine follow-up appointment is unnecessary.

A sling will hold your elbow in a comfortable position for a few days.

You should wean yourself off this as your pain settles and aim to remove the sling completely as soon as you feel able.
You may initially require regular painkillers, as it is important to keep gently moving the elbow and gradually resume daily activities, within the limits of discomfort. This will prevent stiffness and ensure the quickest return to normal function.

Forcible stretching is unnecessary and is likely to cause pain and delay your recovery. Symptoms are usually minor, but can take between three and six weeks to subside.

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

If you have any worries or concerns following discharge from hospital, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital you attended:

- **For Barnet Hospital by:**
  - Phone on 020 8216 4445 9am to midday, Monday-Friday, or leave a voicemail outside of these hours.
  - Email to RF-TR.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net

- **For the Royal Free Hospital by:**
  - Phone on 020 7472 6222, 9am to midday, Monday-Friday, or leave a voicemail outside of these hours.
  - Email to RF-TR.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net.

- Attend the emergency department or your local walk in centre outside of these hours.
Assessment in the virtual fracture clinic

Our fracture clinics have been redesigned to offer you a safe and effective process for assessing your broken bone(s).

Coming to a traditional fracture clinic can be unnecessary in many cases, and often difficult due to the pain and immobility you may experience.

It can be apparent at the time of your first fracture clinic appointment that the opinion of a specialist is required.

This can now be provided at our virtual fracture clinic. The ‘virtual’ clinic is the hub of the new assessment process.

Your x-ray(s) and initial assessment documentation will be reviewed in the virtual fracture clinic by the orthopaedic team within 72 hours of your attendance at the emergency department.

You will not need to attend the hospital for the assessment to take place.

A trained, experienced orthopaedic nurse or physiotherapist will contact you by telephone after this assessment to discuss your treatment or provide advice. They may also arrange a follow-up appointment at the most appropriate clinic.
Date of your assessment:

An orthopaedic nurse or physiotherapist from the virtual fracture clinic will call you at some point between the hours of 9am and midday.

Please ensure the hospital has your correct contact details prior to leaving the emergency department and that you are available to receive this call. If you are not available on the telephone a message will be left where possible.

Patients and their GPs will receive a letter outlining the assessment and outcome.

If you have any questions, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital you attended using the contact details above.

Acknowledgment and references

We would like to thank Glasgow Royal Infirmary for allowing us to reproduce their leaflet. If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email RF-TR.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net.

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.