



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Supracondylar fracture

Physiotherapy department

Patient information



Location of a supracondylar fracture.

What is this information about?

This information is about supracondylar fracture.

It tells you:

- how to look after yourself when you go home from hospital with a supracondylar fracture
- what exercises you can do to help heal and strengthen your arm
- what follow-up treatment you might have
- who to contact if you need further help and support.

What is a supracondylar fracture?

A supracondylar fracture is a break of the humerus bone (the large bone in your upper arm) just above the elbow joint.

Do I have a fracture or a break?

If you have a fracture, it means you have a broken bone. 'Fractured bone' and 'broken bone' both mean the same.

How long is it likely to take for my injury to heal?

It usually takes around 6 weeks for supracondylar fracture to heal.

Will smoking or vaping slow down my healing?

Yes. Smoking slows healing so if you smoke or vape try to stop or cut down. This is most important in the first 2 weeks after your injury. If you would like help to stop smoking talk to your GP or visit [Quit smoking-NHS www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking) for further information.

What should I do if I am in pain after my supracondylar fracture?

If you are in pain, take your usual pain killers or pain killers given to you in the emergency department. Follow the dose instructions on the packet. If you are struggling with pain do speak to your GP or pharmacist.

What must I do if the feeling (sensation) in my fingers changes?

Some people may get pins and needles (tingling) especially in their fourth (little) and third (ring) fingers. Moving your fingers and thumb may help.

If:

- the sensation gets much worse in your fingers
- you completely lose feeling, and you are unable to move fingers.

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic (see contact details at the end of this information) or come to A&E if it is outside of normal working hours (Monday to Friday from 08:30am to 4:30pm).

Will I have plaster or sling after I have an elbow supracondylar fracture?

You will have above elbow plaster cast (sometimes called a backslab) and a sling.

What should I do to care for myself if I have a plaster cast?

Do:

- keep your arm supported in your sling or on some pillows if you find it more comfortable
- the exercises which are shown later in this information.

Do not:

- use anything to scratch yourself under the cast
- trim or cut down the length of the cast.

What happens if my plaster cast gets wet?

It is important to keep your cast dry. If it gets wet, it can become weaker.

If your cast gets slightly wet or damp you can dry it with a hair dryer.

If your cast gets very wet, it will need to be changed. Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

To prevent the cast from getting wet some people find waterproof cast covers useful. You can find and buy these online.

Search for 'waterproof cover for cast'. You can also buy them at some pharmacies.

What should I do if I am struggling with my sling or plaster cast?

Do contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic. We can give you advice or arrange for your sling or cast to be changed if you need that.

Will I have further (follow up) appointments?

Yes. We will arrange for you to see a specialist 7 to 14 days after your injury. Your cast will be removed, and a specialist will examine your elbow. They will decide if you need another cast or brace or further X-rays or other imaging (scans). They will talk with you about the next stage of your treatment.

You will be sent an appointment time and date by post, or you will get a phone call if it is close to the appointment date.

What should I do in the first and second week after my injury?

Rest your arm for the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). However, it is important to keep moving around and moving your fingers and shoulder, so they do not get stiff. Do this gently, without causing too much pain.



Do these exercises about **5 times a day**:

Bend and straighten your fingers. Open and close your hand about **10 times** as shown.

What should I be doing from week 2 after my injury?

The Specialist will give you advice for the next stage of your rehab (rehabilitation) at your follow up appointment. You may need to wear a cast or a brace for up to 6 weeks.

What other things can the Virtual Fracture Clinic help me with?

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic if you:

- are concerned about your symptoms
- are struggling to return to exercise or your usual activities
- would like further information or support after you have read this information.

When can I start driving?

You can return to driving when:

- you are no longer using a plaster cast, a brace or arm sling
- you can turn the steering wheel as much as you need to without it hurting
- you can safely deal with all emergency situations without being in pain or hesitating. For example, you must be able to stop the car quickly and in full control and safely avoid obstacles
- you are covered by your insurance company.

Be aware always try driving in a safe place first.

How can I get a certificate to say that I am fit to work?

You can get a fitness for work statement from the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

How do I contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic?

Working hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. We aim to respond to messages within 24 hours during these times. At times you may receive a call outside of these hours.

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