



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Proximal radius fracture

(No follow-up appointment)

Physiotherapy department

Patient information



Location of a proximal radius fracture.

What is this information about?

This information is about proximal radius fracture.

It tells you:

- how to look after yourself when you go home from hospital with a proximal radius 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 proximal radius fracture?

This is a break to the top, or near the top (near your elbow) to the radius bone. The radius is one of the two long bones in your forearm.

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 6 weeks for a proximal radius fracture to heal. You may still have mild stiffness or not be able to fully straighten your elbow beyond 6 weeks. This is unlikely to cause you any problems. All other movements should return to what they were before your injury.

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 proximal radius 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.

When should I be wearing my sling?

Wear your sling if, and when, it makes your arm more comfortable. Try to stop using it as soon as possible.

What should I do if I am struggling with my sling?

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

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).

When should I start exercising?

Use your arm as soon as you are able to. It is important to keep your elbow moving to prevent stiffness. Do the exercises which are shown later in this information.

Be aware

You should avoid any heavy lifting for the full 6 weeks that it is likely to take for your fracture to heal.

Will I have further (follow up) appointments?

No. We do not usually follow up patients with this type of injury as they heal well.

Be aware

If after 2 weeks you are not close to having full movement in your elbow when slowly turning your palm up (supination) and down (pronation) please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic. This movement should be tested and practiced in position keeping your elbow at your side and bent to 90 degrees (a right angle) in an L shape.

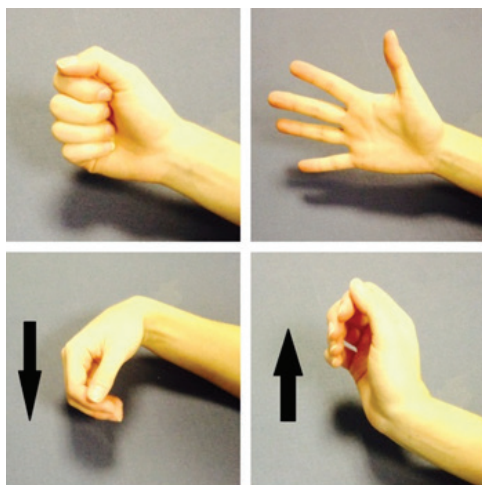
What should I do in the first and second week after my injury?

- 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, wrist, and shoulder, so they do not get stiff. Do this gently, without causing too much pain.
- Apply cold packs (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. This can provide short-term pain relief.

Be aware

the ice must never be in direct contact with your skin.

- Take your arm out of the sling and practise moving your elbow. It is important to move your elbow for periods throughout the day. Aim to practice all the exercises 5 times a day. These exercises should not cause too much pain. Do less of them if they are making your pain worse.

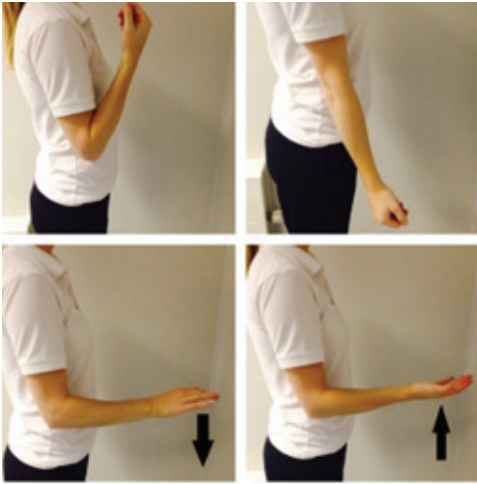


Finger and wrist bending and straightening

Open and close your hand as shown ten times. Then move your wrist up and down

10 times.

After a few days move on to holding a soft ball or a ball of socks. Squeeze the ball as hard as you can without it causing you pain. **Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.**



Elbow bend to straighten

Bend and straighten your elbow as far as you can without pain. You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if necessary. **Repeat ten times** if there is no increase in pain.

Forearm rotations

Keep your elbow at your side and bent to 90 degrees (a right angle) so your arm is in an L shape by your side. Slowly turn your palm up and down. You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if you need to. **Repeat 10 times** if there is no increase in pain.

What should I do from week 3 to week 5 after my injury?

- try not to use a sling
- avoid lifting more than the weight of a cup of tea for 6 weeks
- do normal light activities with the arm
- continue with the above exercises. Increase the number of times you do them as you are able.

What should I do from week 6 after my injury?

Your fracture should be healed around 6 weeks after your injury. You can do normal activity but be guided by any pain you get. You should be able to carry out day to day activities, but heavy tasks may cause discomfort. Start to lift heavier things and to hold them for longer. Always be guided by your symptoms.

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 your 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.

Worthing

01903 205111 Ext. 86312

uhsussex.vfc@nhs.net

St Richards

01243 788122 Ext. 35503

**Today's research is tomorrow's treatments.
That's why UHSx is proud to be a research-active Trust.**

Find out how you can get involved. Visit our website
[www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/research-and-innovation/
information-for-patients-and-public](http://www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/research-and-innovation/information-for-patients-and-public)
or scan the QR code



This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in St Richard's Hospital and Worthing Hospital.

Ref. number: 2517

Publication date: 08/2025 Review date: 08/2028

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer:
The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

