

## Radial head fracture in adults

**Pinderfields Hospital  
Emergency Department  
tel: 01924 541740**

**Dewsbury and District Hospital  
Emergency Department  
tel: 01924 816099**

**Pontefract Hospital  
Urgent Treatment Centre  
tel: 01977 747573**

### Physiotherapy referral:

Details of your injury have been referred to the Physiotherapy department at Mid Yorks Hospital NHS Trust for advice/treatment as **physiotherapy is important for your recovery and gaining the normal functions of the elbow.**

If you wish to take advantage of the physiotherapy referral/ please ring the Physiotherapy department from the next working day between:

**10:00am-4:00pm (Monday – Friday)  
Telephone: 01924 541462**

If you have not made contact with in 5 working days of your visit to the Emergency Department, the referral will no longer be valid and your case closed by Physiotherapy. Your follow up and recovery may be hampered.

Once you have contacted Physiotherapy, they will offer you an appointment for assessment within 2 weeks in one of the three department locations.

Please bring a list of the medications you are currently taking to the appointment.

### Physiotherapy department locations:

#### **Pinderfields:**

Rehabilitation department,  
Gate3A, Level A.

#### **Dewsbury:**

Physiotherapy Acute Room, Ridings Building,  
Ground floor next to yellow desk

#### **Pontefract:**

Rehabilitation institute, Level A

### Useful telephone number:

Swelling should only last 6-8 weeks. There may be some discomfort and 10-20 degree loss of full extension at 6 weeks. Full extension may take 6 months. **BUT** if there is significant stiffness that prevents daily living after 6-8 weeks, please contact the Orthopaedic Team.

Virtual Fracture Clinic: **01924 542961**

We are committed to providing high quality care. If you have a suggestion, comment, complaint or appreciation about the care you have received, or if you need this leaflet in another format please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on: **01924 542972** or email: **myh-tr.palsmidyorks@nhs.net**

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**Pinderfields Hospital**  
Aberford Road, Wakefield WF1 4DG

**Pontefract Hospital**  
Friarwood Lane, Pontefract WF8 1PL

 01924 541000

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After assessing you, we are confident that you can be safely discharged home, however, we would like you to have the following information and advice.

## What is my diagnosis?

You have been diagnosed with minor break in your elbow (radius bone). This injury is very stable and should heal without needing any surgery. You do not need a plaster cast which means that you can safely move the elbow joint. You have been given a sling to support the arm, but it is important that you start moving the elbow as early as possible to (24 to 72 hours) to avoid joint stiffness and muscles tightness.

## What can I expect?

This depends on the severity of injury. It is likely that you may have the following symptoms:

- Pain, bruising or swelling (6-8 weeks)
- Elbow stiffness and reduced movement.

## How long will it last?

It usually takes **6 weeks** for a fracture to heal. It is important that during this time **you should avoid lifting heavy things or doing contact sports** which can stress your elbow joint. It will not cause any further harm to use the elbow for all normal daily activities. We recommend that you reduce the time spent on the sling as early as possible

and start mobilising the elbow to return to normal function. Your elbow will be stiff and sore to begin with but gradually you should be able to increase the degree of movement and activities.

Following the healing of the fracture you could experience some reduction in movement of the elbow joint especially straightening but this is unlikely to affect the function of the arm.

## General advice

**Avoid smoking** as this can delay the bone healing.

**Avoid anti-inflammatory** pain killers (like Ibuprofen or Naproxen) as they can also delay bone healing.

**Do not forcibly stretch** the elbow as this is unnecessary and likely to cause pain and prolong your recovery.

**Ice advice:** We recommend using ice to help reduce swelling. Ice packs or frozen peas can be applied for 15 minutes 4-5 times a day. Ensure that there is a barrier (Such as a tea towel) between the ice and your skin to avoid ice burns.

**Driving:** Once you are able to move the steering wheel quickly (As you would do in an emergency) with comfort then you should be okay to drive.

**Work:** This will depend on your job role and also if duties can be altered temporarily. Heavy lifting should

## Exercises

**Important** to do as the elbow can become very stiff following this fracture. We would recommend that you rest the elbow for the first 24-72 hours, but then it is **essential** that you do these exercises 4-5 times daily.

We advise that the following exercises are held for 5 seconds and repeated at least 10 times.

**1. Making a fist** - make a fist, then open your fingers, repeat for 30 seconds. (Progress with squeezing a ball as pain allows)

**2. Move wrist up and down** - gently move your wrist up and down for 30 seconds

**3. Whilst sitting** - turn your palm upwards then downwards ensuring your elbow is tucked into your side.



**4. When standing** -

• Bend and straighten the elbow fully.

• Apply some extra pressure to bend and straighten by using your other hand. This should be done slowly not into sharp pain.

