

# Aftercare of an upper arm fracture (proximal humeral fracture)

Emergency Department

Information for Patients

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This leaflet gives you information and answers to questions you may have about your injury, recovery and some exercises you should do after your injury.

## What is a proximal humerus fracture?

A proximal humerus fracture is a break (fracture) to your shoulder or just below your shoulder, to the bone called the humerus.

## It is painful and looks different, is that normal?

This is a very painful injury. You must take your pain relief regularly as advised by the clinician that saw you.

It is normal to have swelling and bruising which goes down your arm and makes your fingers swollen. This likely to last for a few weeks.

Search for: 'Taking pain relief for an injury after discharge from the Emergency Department' or leaflet number 1238.

## How long will recovery take?

Bone healing will take around 12 weeks. Early exercise can help you heal quicker.

Most people will be doing their daily activities at 6 months. But your shoulder movement and discomfort will continue to improve for up to 1 year.

The orthopaedic and physiotherapy team will tell you when you can start more exercises and activities.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## What can I do to help healing?

### Avoiding smoking as this can delay healing.

Scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>



### Eat a well balanced diet as this can help with healing.

Scan the QR code or go to:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>



## What are the different types of slings for treatment?

While your arm is getting better in the sling, it is important to keep the joints and muscles moving around the injury. Movement reduces stiffness, improves circulation can reduce other muscle and joint pain and may help you recover quicker. Exercises can be found on page 4 of this leaflet.

### Collar and Cuff positioning

If you have a collar and cuff it is important your arm hangs like in the picture. Your elbow lower than your wrist.



### Polysling

You should find a position that is most comfortable for you. It should be similar to the position on the picture.



## How do I take care of my arm?

- Wearing a sling can affect your balance. You may be at a higher risk of falling over. You must take care especially on the stairs.
- Do not wear any jewelry on this side until the swelling has gone. The jewelry may get too tight and cause injury to the fingers or wrist.
- Do not put pillows under your elbow or rest it on anything. Let it hang in the sling provided.
- Do not lie flat on your back. Use plenty of pillows to support you to sit up, or sleep in a chair, whatever you find most comfortable.
- It may be easier at the start to put your injured arm under your clothes instead of in the sleeve. Keep your sling on and put the clothes over the top.
- Wearing loose fitting clothing and front fastening tops can make it easier to dress and undress.
- To wash the injured armpit: lean forward and let your arm swing forward from the shoulder. Use baby wipes or a face cloth to wash, and dry well.
- Avoid lifting or carrying on the injured side until you have been encouraged to do so.

## Things to look out for:

Bruising and swelling is expected and you may also feel some movement at the fracture site.

**Contact the fracture clinic on 0116 258 5430 or attend the emergency department if the fracture clinic is closed, if you get any of the below symptoms:**

- If you find you have numbness in the injured arm that is not going away with gentle movement.
- If you cannot move your wrist up and down.
- If your pain increases very quickly and pain relief is not helping.
- If you feel the fracture move and cannot control the pain after it has happened.

## Follow up care

You will be sent a follow up appointment with the fracture clinic team, who will guide you through your future care and recovery.

## Exercises

These early exercises cover the first stages of your recovery and can be completed at home in a short amount of time.

## General advice about these exercises:

- Exercises should not be painful.
- At first repeat each exercise 5 times.
- Aim to build up to 10 to 15 repetitions as you are able.
- Repeat them again later in the day, we advise 3 to 5 times a day.
- Little and often is better.
- As you start to use your arm for longer periods you may feel an ache around the shoulder and arm. This is normal.

### Posture Stretch

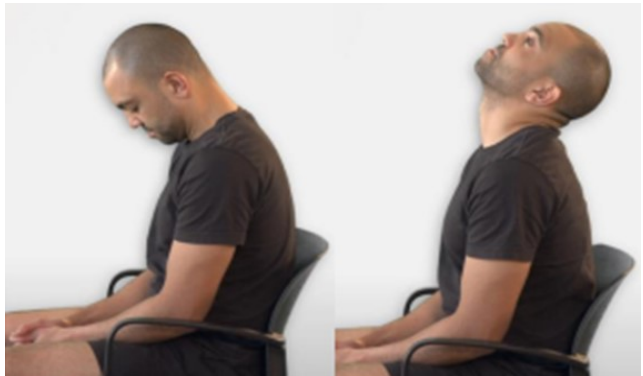
1. Sit up tall and straight.
2. Gently tuck your chin in.
3. Then relax back into your sitting position.



### Neck Movements

#### Chin tilt:

1. Move your chin towards your chest and hold it there for a moment.
2. Then gently move your chin upwards tipping your head backwards.
3. Then move your chin back to the starting position.



#### Ear to shoulder:

1. Keep your shoulders relaxed and looking forwards.
2. Take one ears towards the same shoulder.
3. Repeat to the other side.



## Elbow movements

Bend and straightening the arm at the elbow. You may feel some tightness around the elbow as you do this. This is normal. Do not force the elbow. You can use your other arm to encourage this movement which may help at the start until you can move it on it's own.

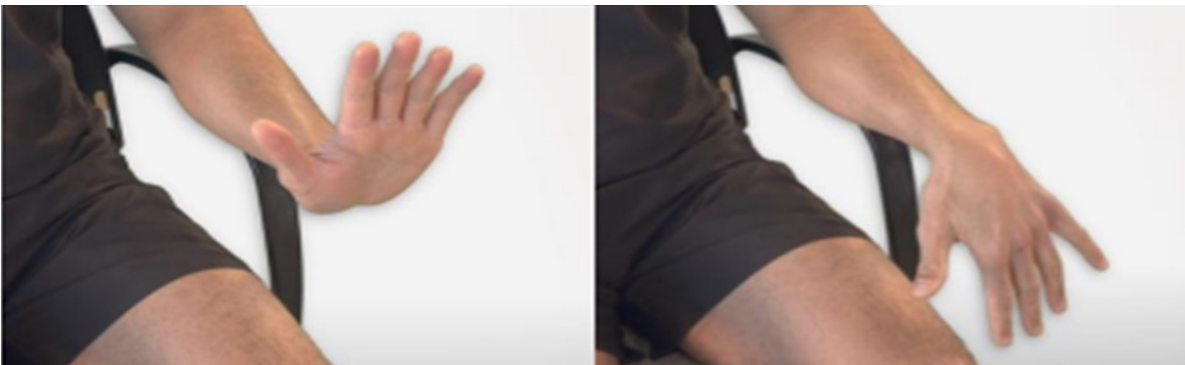


## Hand, wrist, and fingers exercises

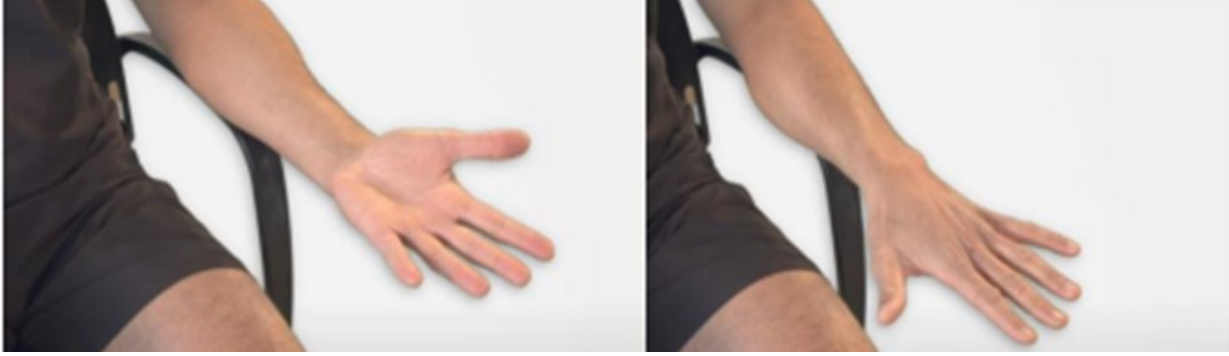
Start by opening and closing your hand to make a fist.



Move your wrist up and down.



Turn your palm up and down.



## Contact details

Minor Injuries Unit, Emergency Department, Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5727

Fracture clinic Leicester Royal Infirmary: 0116 258 5430

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على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)