

Overview

- You have been seen in the Emergency Department and found to have a fracture of your clavicle (collarbone). You have been discharged home with follow-up arranged either via the Fracture Clinic or your GP. If you do not know what your follow up is please ask the staff.
- This leaflet provides advice and information on managing your injury.

Things to remember

- Take regular painkillers for the first few days and then as required.
- The best way to treat the initial pain and discomfort is to place the injured arm in a sling that allows the bruising and bone time to heal.
- These fractures usually heal well with simple pain relief, use of a sling to support the injury whilst it is healing and avoiding strenuous activity until you are pain free and contact sports for 10-12 weeks.
- Move your elbow, hand and fingers regularly as soon as it's comfortable to do so.
- It may take 6-8 weeks or longer for the injury to heal.
- If the pain worsens or you develop weakness or numbness in the arm please see a health professional urgently.

General support

- For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the NHS 111 service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.
- The **NHS** website provides online health information and guidance www.nhs.uk
- **NHS 111** phone line offers medical help and advice from trained advisers supported by nurses and paramedics. Available 24 hours a day. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
- There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, in Crawley and at Lewes Victoria Hospital. www.bsuh.nhs.uk/services/ae/
- **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** can be contacted with your comments and concerns, and to provide general support. PALS@bsuh.nhs.uk
RSCH: 01273 664683.
PRH: 01444 448678
PALS, Royal Sussex County Hospital, Eastern Road, Brighton BN2 5BE

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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.

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NHS

Brighton and Sussex
University Hospitals
NHS Trust

Clavicle (collar bone) fracture

Advice for patients seen in the
Emergency Department



Emergency Department

Royal Sussex County Hospital
Level 5, Thomas Kemp Tower,
Eastern Road, Brighton BN2 5BE
01273 696955 extn. 64261

Princess Royal Hospital
Lewes Road, Haywards Heath RH16 4EX
01444 448745

www.bsuh.nhs.uk

Clavicle fracture

- You have been seen in the Emergency Department and found to have sustained a “fracture” of your clavicle (collar bone).
- The clavicle is a bone connecting your sternum (breast bone) to your scapula (shoulder blade), It is one of the most common bony injuries. It has generally been caused by falling onto the arm or shoulder, or from it being knocked against an object or person.
- A cracked or broken collarbone will be very painful. There may also be:
 - swelling or tenderness around the injured area
 - bruising to the skin
 - rarely, you may have numbness or pins and needles if nerves in the arm are injured – if you have this you should be sure to tell your doctor.
- Your shoulder may be slumped downwards and forwards under the weight of the arm, as the broken collarbone is no longer providing support. This tends to be painful and placing a sling helps with this.

Treatment

- These fractures usually heal well with simple pain relief, use of a sling to support the injury whilst it is healing and avoiding strenuous activity during this time.
- The best way to treat the initial pain and discomfort is to place the injured arm in a sling that supports the fracture. The sling should be worn during the day for at least **2-3 weeks**. At night you should place a soft pillow in between the arm and body for comfort.
- Take regular painkillers for the first few days and then as required.
- An ice pack may also help to reduce pain and swelling, apply it for 10 minutes up to 4 times a day in the initial phase of your injury
- Most clavicle fractures are referred to the fracture clinic. The team in the fracture clinic will contact you to arrange your further management, follow up and physiotherapy.
- Most clavicle fractures do not require an operation but sometimes your orthopedic doctor may want to fix your injury. Your surgeon will discuss this with you prior to surgery should surgery be required.
- It may take 6-8 weeks or longer for the injury to heal and then a further couple of months to restore the strength in your shoulder.

Removing the sling

- First gently and slowly move the arm.
- Once the sling comes off, the arm should be pain-free, although it may be slightly stiff from being in a sling.
- At first your shoulder will feel stiff and painful but it is important that you continue to move it as this will aid your recovery. The soft tissues around your shoulder joint need to be kept moving so that they don't heal in tightened positions.
- Move your elbow, hand and fingers regularly as soon as it's comfortable to do so.
- If the arm is still painful after three weeks, then replace the sling.

General

- Avoid strenuous activity until you are pain free.
- Avoid contact sports for 10-12 weeks from the injury and discuss your return to contact sports with your doctor prior to doing so.
- Speak to your GP if you require further advice about pain relief or if you feel your fracture is not healing.
- If you have been referred to the fracture clinic and not heard after a couple of days, please contact them on 01273 696955 extn 3428 (0830-1230).