

Clavicle (collarbone) fractures in children

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has sustained a clavicle fracture. It explains what a clavicle fracture is and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is a clavicle fracture?

A clavicle fracture is a broken collarbone (a bone in the shoulder that connects the shoulder blade to the breastbone).

What causes this type of injury?

A clavicle fracture is a common injury in children. It is usually caused by a fall onto an out-stretched hand (FOOSH). Clavicle fractures can happen from falls off scooters, skates or monkey bars, as well as direct hits in contact sports like football or rugby.

How is this type of injury treated?

A clavicle fracture can be very painful and it's normal to have some swelling and bruising, but the injury generally heals by itself without treatment in 12 weeks.

Sling

We will place your child's arm in a sling to:

- help support their injured shoulder and ease any discomfort
- protect their injury while it heals
- reduce how much they move their injured shoulder

For the first two weeks, your child will need to wear the sling all day and night until their pain starts to improve. Your child can then slowly reduce how long they wear the sling for each day.

After three weeks, your child can start to take their arm out of the sling to perform gentle exercises up to three times a day to gradually increase the range of movement in their injured shoulder. We will show you some suitable exercises before your child leaves hospital. The exercises should not cause your child any pain. If your child does experience pain, they should stop the exercise and rest before trying another movement or exercise.

After six weeks, your child's fracture will have nearly healed, and they can stop wearing the sling.

Pain relief medication

Your child will usually experience the worst pain the first week after their injury. Regular pain relief medications, such as paracetamol (Calpol®) and ibuprofen, will help to ease their discomfort. Always check the label before giving your child any over-the-counter medications.

Ice

Swelling and bruising around your child's shoulder will usually settle down within a week or so. Applying ice (an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to your child's injury can help to reduce any pain and swelling.

Are there any complications?

Most clavicle fractures heal without difficulty. However, occasionally, a lump may form under the skin as the injury heals. This will usually remodel (be removed by the body and replaced with new bone tissue) over six to 12 months.

A second fall or injury within the first 12 weeks could slow down your child's healing process or cause a refracture (the bone being broken again).

When can my child resume their normal daily activities?

Your child can begin to gently move their injured shoulder when it feels comfortable to do so.

For 12 weeks after their injury, your child should **not**:

- do any heavy lifting or bear weight (like doing push-ups) with the injured shoulder
- participate in any contact sports or high impact activities, such as:
 - basketball
 - cricket
 - football
 - hockey
 - horse riding
 - ice skating
 - rugby
 - skiing

Will my child need any follow-up care?

Most children will not need physiotherapy or any follow-up appointments after this type of injury and should gradually regain full strength and movement in their shoulder over time.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact us if your child has:

- pain that gets worse quickly and without warning.
- pain that does not get better after taking regular pain relief medication.
- a deep cut over the fracture or if it looks like the collarbone is about to poke out.
- a numb sensation in their arm and/or is unable to wiggle their fingers.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Children's outpatient department

Telephone: **023 8120 4477** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Email: paedorthopaedics@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/broken-collarbone

www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets

www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport

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