

Virtual fracture clinic

Elbow sprain (soft tissue elbow injury)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

The Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) helps you recover from your injury without needing to come back to the hospital. This is called self-management.

Use the rehabilitation plan in this leaflet to guide your recovery.

Video about your injury and recovery

Watch this video to help your recovery. A doctor explains your injury and a physiotherapist shows how to do the exercises:

www.fracturecare.co.uk/care-plans/elbow/sprain-soft-tissue-injury-to-elbow/

What is a sprained elbow?

This is a soft tissue injury or sprain to the elbow. The location is shown in the picture.



Healing

It normally takes 6 weeks for this injury to heal.

Smoking slows down your healing. So, we advise that you stop smoking (including vaping) while your fracture heals. For more information, talk to your GP or go to nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

Pain and swelling

Your elbow may be swollen. You will have some pain. You can help reduce pain and swelling by:

- taking pain medication
- using ice or cold packs

Wearing your sling

You may be given a sling. This is for comfort only. Try to stop using it as soon as possible.



Exercise and activity

It is important to start exercises as soon as possible. Good rehabilitation will improve your recovery. Elbows get stiff very quickly

You can expect some discomfort at first. Do not continue if the pain gets worse and you cannot tolerate it. **You should avoid lifting anything heavier than a cup of tea for the first 6 weeks.** You can do light activities when your pain has settled.

Follow the instructions on the next pages.

Caring for your injury: weeks 1 to 6

Try to stop using your sling as soon as possible. Take it off regularly for your exercises.

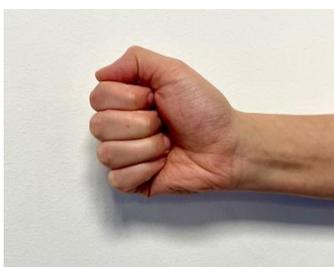
Using a cold pack will help with your pain and swelling.

- use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel
- put this on your elbow for up to 15 minutes every few hours
- make sure the ice is not in direct contact with your skin

Try to rest your elbow, especially in the first 24 to 72 hours.

Exercises

Hand and wrist exercises:

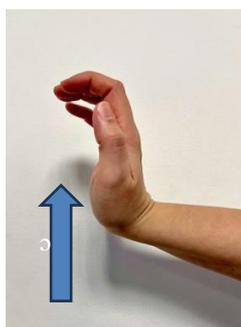
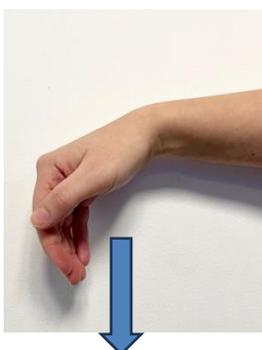


Open and close your hand.

Next, move your wrist up and down. Repeat 10 times.

After a few days, hold a soft ball or rolled up socks.

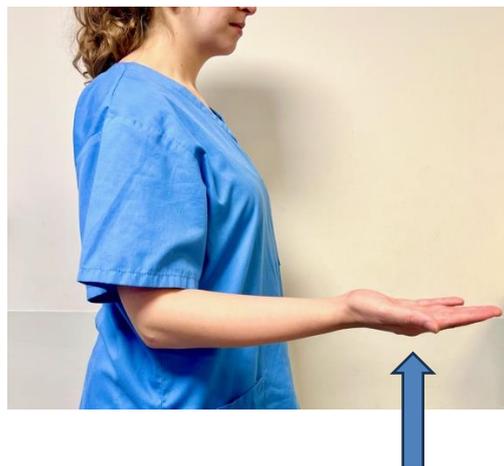
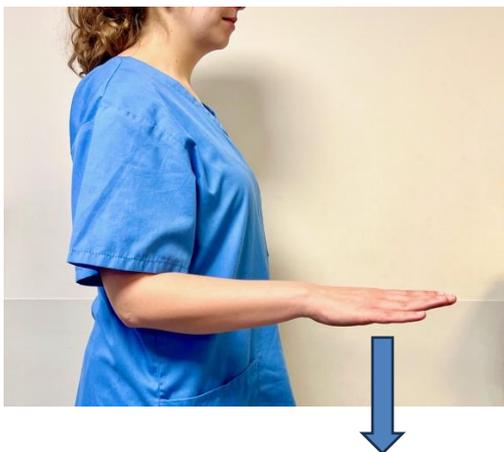
Squeeze the ball and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times.





Bend and straighten your elbow.

Repeat 10 times.



Bend your elbow to a right angle.

Slowly turn your palm up to the ceiling and down to the ground.

Repeat 10 times.

Frequently asked questions

I'm having trouble with my sling. What do I do?

Please contact the VFC. We can give you advice and may replace the sling.

When can I drive again?

You can return to driving when:

- you are no longer using your sling
- you can walk comfortably and
- you can perform an emergency stop pain free

Always test how well you can drive in a safe place first.

How can I get a 'fit note' for work?

Ask your GP for a 'fitness for work' statement. You can give this to your employer.

What do I do with my sling when I no longer need it?

Your sling cannot be used again, so you do not need to return it.

Contact the VFC

We're here to help if you've got concerns about your injury, symptoms or exercises.

Call us on 077 7455 5354 (Monday to Friday between 09.00 and 17.00).

Or you can **email** imperial.vfc@nhs.net.

So, please contact us if you:

- have any concerns about your injury or symptoms
- cannot follow this rehabilitation plan
- are expecting an appointment letter and have not received it
- need help with your boot, brace or sling

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service. Staff will be happy to answer your questions. So, if you have **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please talk to a member of staff. Or you can contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**). Call **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday) or email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net

The PALS team will listen to your concerns and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Or, to complain, contact our complaints department:

Call **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Or write to: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY