

Virtual Fracture Clinic

Injuries – general advice

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

Many injuries recover without needing medical treatment. This is true even if there is a broken bone. Your injury has been assessed by a hospital specialist. They used information from the clinician who saw you first, and any scans that have been done. They have confirmed that you have an injury that should recover without medical intervention, so you do not need to travel to the hospital.

What is self-management?

We have found that certain injuries are best looked after by you, at home. This is called **self-management**. The Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) is here to help you do this, with exercise leaflets, videos and support.

You can expect pain and swelling at first. But this is part of the normal healing process. These symptoms should gradually decrease over about two weeks.

How can I reduce swelling and pain?

Follow the simple steps below to manage your symptoms.

Rest

Part of the body's normal response to injury is pain and swelling. Rest is an important part of the healing process.

Ice

Ice is a great natural anaesthetic. It helps relieve pain and controls swelling.

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

You may find it helps to apply ice before and after completing your exercises.

Elevation

It is normal to experience swelling after an injury. Keeping your injured foot, ankle or arm raised (elevation) reduces swelling. This in turn relieves pain and speeds up your healing. Keep your injured limb elevated as much as possible during the first 72 hours.

Exercises

It is important to start exercises as soon as possible. Good rehabilitation will improve your recovery.

You can expect some discomfort at first. Do not continue if the pain gets worse and you cannot tolerate it.

Follow the instructions on the VFC leaflets you are given. You can also watch a video that explains your injury and demonstrates the exercises.

What pain relief will I need?

Over-the-counter medicines are often enough for managing your symptoms.

The emergency department may have prescribed you with some pain relief. Take these as instructed to help keep on top of the pain. If you feel that this medication is not helping, talk to a pharmacist or your GP to see if there is an alternative option.

When can I drive?

If you have an injury to your lower limb you can return to driving when you:

- no longer need the orthopaedic boot or crutches
- are confident that you can do an emergency stop.

If you have an upper limb injury, you can begin driving when you:

- are no longer using your sling
- have enough pain-free strength in your arm

If you have a follow-up appointment with us, wait until your consultant or physiotherapist has said you can drive.

If you are in any doubt, do not drive until you have spoken to our team.

When I can return to work or do sport?

You may need some time off work. When you return, you may need light or amended duties. The advice given will depend on your profession and your injury.

When you can return to work depends on your job and your injury. You should discuss this with the VFC, your GP and your employer.

Advice about when you can return to sport will be given during your telephone consultation.

What is deep vein thrombosis (DVT)?

When you are less mobile you are at higher risk of developing a blood clot, known as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Some patients need medication to reduce this risk. The clinician who referred you to the VFC will have considered this. They will have prescribed you drugs if required.

Seek urgent medical attention if you develop signs of a DVT. These are:

- swelling and tenderness in your calf and lower leg, rather than your knee
- a change in colour of your toes compared with your other leg (typically purple)
- pain in the calf, groin or chest area
- redness and heat in the affected area

Smoking

Medical evidence suggests breaks take longer to heal if you smoke. In extreme cases, smoking can stop healing altogether.

It is important to think about this information. Consider how will it affect your recovery from your recent injury.

Stopping smoking (including vaping) during the healing phase of a fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury. For more information, talk to your GP or go to [nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/](https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/)

Should I return my crutches, boot or sling when I no longer need them?

Please return crutches to the fracture clinic or to A&E. They can be refurbished and reused. Your boot, brace or 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, and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on

020 3312 7777 (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

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

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

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