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Undisplaced supracondylar fracture

***Information for
children, parents and carers***



**Emergency Department
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital**



Type of sling your child could have

What is a supracondylar fracture?

This is an injury to the humerus bone (the bone in the upper arm) just above the elbow joint. “Supra” means “above” and the condyle is a bony part of the elbow joint.

These injuries are very common, particularly in younger children. They can be difficult to diagnose as they sometimes don’t show up on X-ray and we rely on other subtle X-ray changes to raise our suspicion. When there is uncertainty, to be safe, we often treat children as if there has been a fracture.

In either case, the bones have not moved out of place (they are “undisplaced”) and are at very low risk of any further movement.

An injury of this kind usually heals well with no specific treatment or follow-up and does not result in long term problems. Initial healing takes around 3 weeks.

How is it treated?

Wearing a sling

We place your child’s injured arm in a sling for 3 weeks. You can give your child regular simple pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, always following the instructions on the bottle or packet.

During this time you can remove the sling when your child is bathing and showering. When your child's sling is removed at these times, do encourage them to support their injured arm with their other hand.

It is important for your child to keep moving their wrist and fingers throughout the 3 weeks to avoid stiffness.

After 2 weeks wearing the sling

After using the sling for the first 2 weeks, you can take off the sling intermittently during week 3 and encourage your child to make some gentle movements.

After 3 weeks when sling removed

It is very important that your child starts to begin bending and straightening their elbow when the sling is removed 3 weeks after their injury.

Please note: your child should move their own arm and their elbow should never be forced.

Backslab cast

Occasionally the clinician may decide that your child's arm needs more support than a sling can provide. If this is the case, we apply a backslab cast (a type of plaster cast) is applied for 2 to 3 weeks.

You can remove this plaster carefully and safely. We'll give you a link to an online video showing you how to do this. The treatment after this is removed is similar to when a sling alone is used.

Will they need physiotherapy?

Once the sling comes off, encourage your child to move their elbow as they are able. Important movements to encourage and exercise are:

1. Getting their elbow as straight as possible (without forcing it)
2. Bending their arm to try and touch the shoulder with their fingers / thumb on the same side

If their range of movement is not improving by 2 weeks after the sling is removed, please contact us for physiotherapy help (our phone number is on page 5 of this leaflet).

What should we expect?

- Your child should sleep semi-upright in bed (keep their upper body raised on pillows, cushions etc) for the 3 weeks while they're wearing in the sling.
- It is common for children to have some discomfort as the elbow begins to move. Simple pain relief should allow increased use and manage this discomfort.
- Some discomfort may last for up to 4 weeks after the sling (or plaster) comes off.
- There is usually some restriction in range of movement at the elbow for up to 6 weeks after the sling comes off, but this should improve over time.

When can they return to sports?

Non-contact sports such as swimming and running can be started once the sling comes off at 3 weeks after their injury

Your child should avoid contact sports such as rugby, football or basketball for 6 weeks. They can return to playing these sports **gradually** after this time.

Contact telephone number

If you have any concerns or if your child still has significant pain after 4 weeks, please contact us on the number below. We'll then arrange an appointment to review their progress.

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 01224 552041

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