

What is my diagnosis?

You have fractured (broken) a small bone in the elbow called the **radial head**.

This type of injury is very common - hundreds of people have this injury each year in Lothian. Almost all of these injuries heal fully **without the need for any intervention or surgery**.

You should have been provided with a collar-and-cuff (sling) to support your arm for a few days.



What happens next?

- Your X-rays and notes will be checked by a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon

If nothing further is needed, we will not contact you

- If any other treatment or assessment is needed we will contact you by telephone or post
- Please make sure the Emergency Department/Minor Injury Unit reception staff have your mobile and home phone numbers

What can I expect during my recovery?

- The pain begins to settle after a week
- The injury will heal over the course of **6 weeks** but you may have some aching for up to **3 months**
- You do not have to wear the sling. It is only used to provide comfort for a few days
- Regaining a full range of movement as soon as possible will speed up your recovery
- Perform the exercises on the next page as soon as your pain allows you to do so
- Most people return to desk work by **1 to 2 weeks**, but manual work may not be possible for **4 to 6 weeks** depending on your symptoms
- There is **no specific time you can drive again**. It is **illegal** to drive when wearing a sling, splint, cast, or moonboot. As you recover, it is your legal responsibility to be certain before you return to driving that you are able to control your vehicle normally and safely.

Key exercises

Wrist, fingers and thumb

- As soon as you can, begin to move your wrist up and down and from side to side
- Move your hand between making a fist and to fully opened with the fingers splayed apart

Elbow bending and straightening

- Begin by gently bending and straightening your elbow within a range that is comfortable
- Once the pain begins to settle, use your other hand to gently stretch the elbow straight and then bend it up. Do not use too much force- just go until you feel a little discomfort.

Forearm rotation

- With your elbows bent and arms by your side, rotate so your palms face the ceiling then the floor

What if I have a problem?

Very occasionally some patients have difficulties with ongoing pain or stiffness. If you have any issues beyond **three months** after injury please contact us on the details below.

Get in touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email if you have queries about your injury:

traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

**If you do not receive a reply after 3 working days call our Monday-Friday helpline (8am-4pm):
0131 242 3410**

Urgent issues

Please call the department where you were initially seen about your injury:

- **RIE Minor Injuries Unit:** 0131 242 3942 (8am- midnight, if after midnight contact RIE Emergency Department 0131 242 1300)
- **WGH Minor Injuries Clinic:** 0131 536 3468 (9am-8:30pm)
- **SJH Emergency Department:** 01506 523 011 (24 hours)