

Patient Information Sheet

- Proximal Humerus Fracture

What do I need to know?

What is my diagnosis?

You have broken (fractured) the top end of the humerus bone at your shoulder. The type of injury you have suffered is painful but usually heals without the need for surgery. It is best treated with a collar and cuff. The proximal humerus has a great ability to heal and does not need to be in a perfect position to work normally and surgery is rarely needed.

What happens next?

We may contact you to come back to the clinic at **2 weeks** for an X-Ray, or one of our Trauma Nurse or Physio Practitioners may call you to check on your condition and discharge you without the need for you to come back to the hospital. You may need physiotherapy in addition to the exercises below. This will be arranged through the fracture clinic if needed.

What should I expect during recovery?

Weeks 1 and 2

- The shoulder will be painful but it should be tolerable while you wear the collar and cuff.
- You should have normal sensation in your fingers.
- Simple pain killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen should be sufficient to manage your pain.
- You will probably notice some bruising and swelling over your shoulder, chest and down into your elbow.
- **After two weeks**, you may begin **EXERCISE 1** moving your arm back & forward in small circles while it hangs freely.

Weeks 3-6

- The pain will slowly begin to reduce.
- The bruising will start to settle.
- Progress through EXERCISES 2-6. Repeat x10 each and x3 per day.

Weeks 7-12

- At this stage your pain should be diminishing.
- Your shoulder will feel stiff and this is expected.
- EXERCISES 5 & 6 will take longer to achieve.

What does my X-ray look like?



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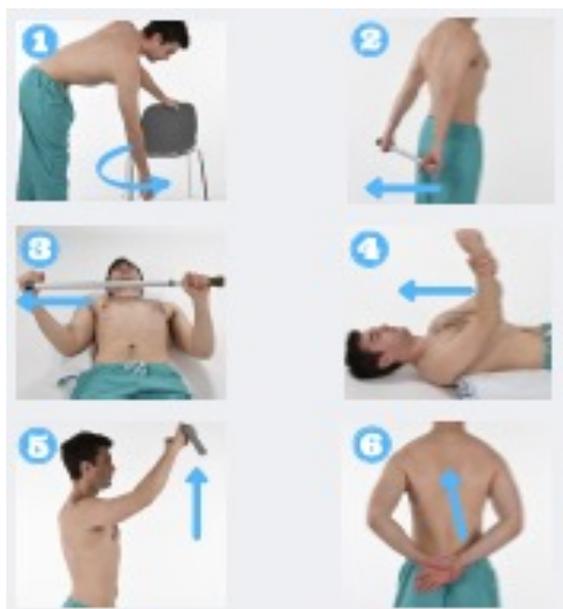
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What do I need to know?

What if my shoulder does not heal?

In rare cases the proximal humerus will not heal. If this is the case, you will notice ongoing pain in your shoulder beyond 3 months. You may have difficulty lifting anything heavy with that arm and may experience painful clicking within the shoulder. Alternatively, some patients find stiffness of their shoulder a problem. If this happens, please contact us using the email below.

Key Exercises



Top Tips

- Sleep in a chair or with lots of pillows for the first few weeks after the injury.
- Try sleeping with the arm inside a t-shirt at night to reduce movement.
- Keep your elbow, wrist, fingers/thumb moving as much as you can.
- Stop or cut down on smoking (smoking has been proven to slow healing and increase the risk of 'non-union' (when the bone doesn't heal)).

Get in touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email if you have queries regarding your shoulder:
traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

If you do not receive a reply after 3 working days call our helpline in hours (8am-5pm):
0131 2423410

Urgent Issues

Please call the Minor Injuries Unit helpline on 0131 2423942 of any urgent issues, for example:
There is a sudden, severe, constant increase in the pain.

You have progressive worsening numbness and weakness in your hand / wrist.