

Patient Information Sheet - 12

Humeral Shaft Fracture

What do I need to know?

What is my diagnosis?

You have fractured (broken) the bone in the upper arm called the humerus. The bone connects the shoulder joint to the elbow joint.

The type of injury you have suffered is painful but most often **heals without the need for surgery**. You should have been provided with a special brace and sling (see picture at the bottom of the page)

What happens next?

You will receive an appointment in the fracture clinic around **two weeks** after injury. Most patients are treated in the brace for around **8 weeks** to allow the bones to heal. Occasionally surgery is needed if the bone is stubborn to heal.

Key points

- A humerus fracture is sore and you may need painkillers
- The splint stops the bones moving too much and encourages the two ends to health to one another
- The splint should be left on at all times between appointments, but the **sling around the wrist** can be removed when you are dressing, washing, or sitting down.
- Take off the sling a few times each day to bend and straighten your elbow to avoid it getting stiff
- You can still use your hand for simple day to day tasks



What can I expect during my recovery?

- The pain will begin to settle around **2 to 3 weeks** after injury.
- The injury will heal over the course of **8 to 12 weeks**.
- **Smoking delays healing** – please consider reducing or stopping to try and speed up your recovery.
- You will attend clinic every other week where the brace is removed to allow the skin to be cleaned.
- 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.

What if my arm doesn't heal?

Occasionally the two bone ends do not heal (around in 10 patients). You will have regular follow up with your surgeon will be able to discuss the options for surgery.

Get in touch

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

traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Helpline Monday-Friday (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)