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# ***Humeral neck fracture***

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



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



**An example of a “collar and cuff”**

## ***What is a humeral neck fracture?***

The humerus (arm bone) is the long thin bone of the upper arm that is located between the shoulder and the elbow. The injury that we have identified is at the top of this bone (the “neck”), just below your child’s shoulder joint.

Humeral neck fractures are common in children but they usually heal well with no specific treatment or follow-up and do not result in long term problems. Normal healing takes around 4 weeks in children and 6 weeks in adolescents.

## ***How is it treated?***

### **Wearing a “collar and cuff”**

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

We **do not use slings** for this type of injury.

The weight of the arm “dangling” in the collar and cuff helps to keep the bones in a good position and reduce pain.

To help with pain and a good night’s sleep, your child should sleep semi-upright in bed for the two weeks in the collar and cuff. Don’t prop up the elbow as it is the “dangling” that helps with your child’s pain.

**The first 2 weeks:**

Your child should wear the collar and cuff constantly for the first 2 weeks.

You should remove their wrist from the cuff for 5 to 10 minutes, 4 times a day so they can move the other parts of their arm to stop them from stiffening.

When your child's collar and cuff is removed at these times, do encourage them to bend and straighten their elbow and let their arm fall to their side. It is a good idea for them to move the wrist and fingers throughout to avoid stiffness. During this time, you can remove the collar and cuff fully when your child is bathing and showering.

**The next 2 weeks:**

After the first 2 weeks, your child can take off the collar and cuff for longer spells as their comfort allows.

They can start to gradually reduce their use of the collar and cuff. It may be a good idea to start by taking it off at home for the first week, using the collar and cuff when they're at school or out and about.

The aim is for your child not to need the collar and cuff by the end of week 3 or 4.

## ***What should we expect?***

- It is common for children to have some discomfort as their shoulder begins to move from week 3 of treatment. Simple pain relief should allow increased use and manage this discomfort.
- Some discomfort may last for up to 4 weeks after the collar and cuff comes off (week 6 after their injury).
- There is usually some restriction in range of movement at the shoulder and elbow for up to 6 weeks after the collar and cuff comes off.

## ***Will they need physiotherapy?***

Once the collar and cuff comes off, encourage your child to use their shoulder as they feel able. If their range of movement is not improving by 4 weeks after the injury, please contact us for physiotherapy help (our phone number is on page 4 of this leaflet).

## ***When can they return to sports?***

Non-contact sports such as swimming and running can be started once the collar and cuff comes off altogether. This usually takes 3 to 4 weeks.

You 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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Westburn Road  
Aberdeen  
AB25 2ZG**

** 01224 552041**



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