

This injury is usually caused by a direct blow (as in a rugby tackle) or a fall (off a bike or skateboard) onto the shoulder. This injury can be very painful, but it will usually heal without complications.

You should read this information carefully before leaving Orthopaedic clinic, and clarify any points which are unclear.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made following an examination of the shoulder. Often there is a prominence of the clavicle, or a lump, where the bone is broken. Movement in the shoulder will be limited, and your doctor will arrange an xray to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

Your fractured clavicle will usually be treated in a triangular sling, which helps to support the elbow and arm, reducing “drag” on the collarbone. It is recommended that you use the sling for approximately 2 weeks. It is not possible to cast a clavicle fracture.

Pain Relief

As this is a very painful injury it is important that you take pain medication frequently and correctly to help control your pain. We recommended that adults take a combination of:

- Paracetamol (Panadol) for pain and fever. 1 gram (2 tablets) every 4-6 hours. Do not exceed more than 4 grams (8 tablets) over a 24 hour period
- An anti-inflammatory medicine such as voltaren or neurofen morning and night time to reduce swelling

Please tell us if you are allergic to any medications or have any reason not to take these medications. A prescription should be provided for you to obtain pain relief medication. You can also buy the medicines from your local Pharmacy without a prescription.

Clothing

It is also possible to control your pain by ensuring your arm and shoulder is well supported. For this reason it is necessary to ensure the sling or brace are correctly adjusted and well fitting. For the first week or so after your injury it is recommended that you use your sling inside your clothing.

In the second week you should wear your sling on the outside. Dressing and undressing can be painful. To minimise this you should follow these instructions.

When putting your shirt on:

- Put the arm of the affected shoulder into the sleeve of your shirt. Move the shirt sleeve to above the elbow
- Put your head through the neck
- Put the unaffected arm through the sleeve last

To remove your shirt:

- Take the unaffected arm out first
- Lift the shirt over your head and clear
- You will then be able to slide the shirt down the injured side without difficulty

Exercises

In the first week following your injury exercises should be kept to a minimum. As the pain becomes less severe the exercises can be gradually increased. Discomfort is common and expected with exercises, however, if you are experiencing pain you may be doing too much.

You should exercise all unaffected joints such as the elbow and wrist of the affected side. To do this:

- remove the sling
- supporting the upper arm, bend and straighten the elbow joint
- turn your hand palm up, then palm down
- bend and straighten the wrist

[continued]

The shoulder joint should also be gently exercised.

To do this:

- lean forward, and with your arm hanging straight down allow it to swing freely, like a pendulum

Gradually the amount of movement in the shoulder should be increased, but you should **not** attempt to lift weights.

Outlook

As your clavicle fracture begins to heal it is not uncommon to feel the bone ends clicking and moving. This is normal, and nothing to be concerned about. It is rare for clavicle fractures to fail to heal properly.

Once healed you may always have a deformity over the fracture site. This may become quite prominent, but this deformity will not affect the movement or strength of your arm or shoulder.

To ensure things are healing normally we will see you in the Orthopaedic Clinic 2-3 weeks following your injury. An x-ray may be taken at that stage, but the main purpose of the visit is to check shoulder movement, and arrange physiotherapy if required. A further visit will be arranged for 4-5 weeks following this to check healing of the fracture.

Work and Sporting Activity

As there is some risk of falling and reinjuring yourself with most sporting activity you should seek medical advice before returning to any sport. Contact sport should be avoided until your fracture has healed.

You will be able to return to work as soon as you are comfortable, unless your work involves heavy lifting. In this case you will be given an ACC certificate limiting your work activities until you are fit.

When should I seek help?

Phone *immediately* (Wellington Orthopaedic clinic / Kenepuru Outpatients during clinic hours or Emergency Dept if after hours) **if you notice:**

- The skin over the broken bone becomes white

- The lump develops a sharp point
- You develop numbness or tingling in your arm or hand
- You are unable to move your hand or wrist
- Your pain cannot be controlled with your pain medication

Follow-up appointments

It is important that you return for your follow-up appointments. You will be given an Orthopaedic clinic appointment where your injury and progress is reviewed. An x-ray will be taken to ensure that the bone is healing and in the correct place. This may be followed up with several appointments before you are discharged from the clinic.

Contact us

Remember if you do not have an appointment, always phone before coming to Orthopaedic clinic.

Wellington Hospital Orthopaedic Clinic

Phone: (04) 385 5952 Fax: (04) 385 5953

Hours of opening: Monday – Friday (excluding Public Holidays) 8am – 5.30pm

Outside of these hours please contact the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department
Phone (04) 385 5999 Ext 5432

Kenepuru Hospital Outpatients

Phone: (04) 385 5999 Ext 7205

Hours: Monday – Friday (excluding Public Holidays) 8am – 5pm

Outside of these hours please contact the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department
Phone (04) 385 5999 Ext 5432

Can't keep your outpatient appointment?

Please phone us on 0800 999 442 and let us know as soon as possible.