

Proximal humerus fracture

Information for patients

This booklet contains information about your shoulder injury. It will help you to understand what the injury means and how we plan to help you recover with physiotherapy rehabilitation.

What is a proximal humerus fracture?

Your shoulder is a ball and socket joint that is made up of the upper arm bone called the humerus and the shoulder blade which is called the scapula. The term proximal refers to the 'upper' part of the humerus bone.

Proximal humerus fractures are very common, particularly in people over the age of 65. They can be painful injuries but can often be managed well with physiotherapy. Often you do not require surgery to recover from this injury.

The initial bone healing takes approximately 3-6 weeks; however, it can take longer for the pain to settle completely and for you to return to your normal function and activities. Physiotherapy care can help you get better as quickly as possible.



After your injury

Your physiotherapist will advise and help you to settle your pain and support your shoulder whilst it heals and guide you through your rehabilitation journey.

It is important to manage your pain following your injury in order to help you sleep and complete your exercises. If your shoulder pain is not well controlled and you are struggling to do these things, we would recommend you seek advice from your GP or medical team.

Following your injury, you will be issued with a collar and cuff or sling to rest the injured tissues to allow them to heal correctly. This will also help with the pain and discomfort that you will be experiencing.

How long you should use this for varies from patient to patient and we recommend that you work closely with your physiotherapist, who will guide you with this.

You can remove this for washing, dressing and to do your exercises.



How do I fit my sling?

Please click on the links (or copy and paste into your browser) beside each instruction/exercise to view a video demonstration.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=VbUkWkcNlo4>



1. Support your arm on a pillow before you start. Slide your sling underneath the arm, so that your elbow is tucked into the corner of the sling, as shown.



2. Now using the non-operated arm feed the strap around your back and over the non-operated shoulder, as shown.



3. Now pull the strap up on itself and fix the velcro at a level where the arm feels comfortable and supported, as shown.

How can I sleep?

Sleeping can be a little uncomfortable if you try to lie on your injured shoulder. We recommend that you lie on your opposite side. Ordinary pillows can be used to give yourself comfort and support (feather pillows are easier to use than foam ones). Wear your sling while sleeping as shown below.



If sleeping on your side, having a pillow or two under your head usually gives enough support for most people. A pillow tucked along your back helps to prevent you rolling onto your injured shoulder in the night. A pillow in front of your tummy is a nice place to rest your hand to help you sleep.

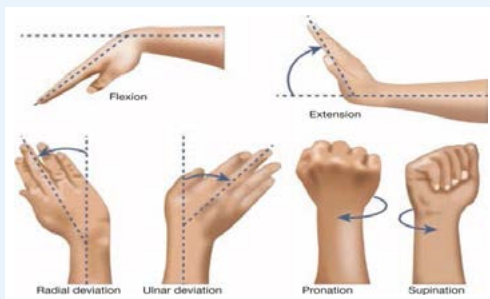


If sleeping on your back, use a pillow under the elbow of your injured arm as shown. Again, important in helping you get a good night's rest.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is very important if you are to make a full recovery following your injury. The physiotherapist will guide you on how to return to your normal work and activities.

It is important to keep your hand and wrist moving to prevent these joints stiffening or becoming painful. We would suggest doing hand exercises little and often to help with swelling.



An initial exercise that can help to settle down your pain and swelling and prevent your shoulder and elbow from getting stiff is a gentle pendulum exercise, shown below.



Leaning forwards from your hips (you may want to use your other arm to support yourself on a work top if unsure about leaning forwards), circle your arms from your shoulder in gentle, pendulum type movements.

Keep your palms facing forwards as you go clockwise and anticlockwise.

We would suggest you perform this twice a day and do 10 repetitions as comfort allows.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desk-top&v=KP_AJ15BRgg

When you have your follow up physiotherapy appointment, they will add another two exercises for you to start daily at home.

Do not start these until guided to by your physiotherapist.



Lying on your back on your bed with the back of the arm supported using towels/cushions, use your good arm to lift your other arm up towards your head.

Try to get your hands on top of your head if you can.

We would suggest you perform this twice a day and do 10 repetitions as comfort allows.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=GkhahPUKb2Q>



Lying on your back on your bed with the back of the arm supported using towels/cushions.

Bend your elbows to 90 degrees and use a stick to turn your operated arm out to the side. Keep your elbows tucked in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=stT8sD0HUhM>

Again, try to perform this twice a day and do 10 repetitions as comfort allows.

Your physiotherapist will show you other exercises to progress on to, in order to regain your shoulder movement and gradually strengthen and condition your shoulder muscles.

Your rehabilitation will progress until you have made a good recovery back to all your normal activities, work, and sports.

When can I do my normal activities?

This depends upon your symptoms.

Driving can be resumed when you are comfortable and safe to control a car. It is wise to discuss this with your insurance company. We would advise you not to drive for at least 4-6 weeks following your injury.

Guide:

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|---|-----------------|
| • Essential activities (washing/dressing) | 1-3 weeks |
| • Light work (simple household tasks, no lifting) | 4-6 weeks |
| • Medium (light lifting below shoulder level/office work) | 6 weeks onwards |
| • Heavy activities and physical work (above shoulder level) | 3-6 months |

If you are at all worried about your shoulder you should contact the hospital's fracture clinic team. The telephone numbers are below.

Useful contact numbers

King's Mill Hospital

Telephone: 01623 622515

Newark Hospital

Telephone: 01636 681681

Extension number

King's Mill physiotherapy
department

3221 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm)

Newark Hospital physiotherapy
department

5885 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm)

Email: sfh-tr.TherapyServices@nhs.net

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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