

*This fact sheet has been developed in consultation with the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Orthopaedic team and Consumers.*

*Information contained in this fact sheet is a guideline for care only. Please consult with your doctor or health professional to make sure that this information is right for you.*



**Metro North**  
Hospital and Health Service

### **Worries or concerns**

For any immediate concerns or questions regarding your injury please contact:

- **Your General Practitioner (GP).**  
They are able to speak directly to an Orthopaedic team at Redcliffe Hospital or Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital if required
- **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** for health advice, triage and referral from a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH provides access to interpreting services for callers not confident with English.

**In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).**

# **RADIAL HEAD OR NECK FRACTURES (NON-DISPLACED)**

Fact Sheet

## Your fracture

The radius is one of two bones in the forearm that extend from the wrist to the elbow. It is on the same side as your thumb. A fracture of the radial head or neck is a break at the elbow end.

Your fracture has been assessed as a simple, non-displaced fracture which does not require specialist orthopaedic care. You will likely make a good recovery.

## TREATMENT

- The arm may be immobilised in a compression bandage such as “tubigrip” and a sling for approximately 2 – 4 weeks.
- Some fractures may benefit from hand therapy. A hand therapist can provide exercises to regain range of motion, strength and function. The health practitioner who assessed your injury would have referred you to a hand therapist if appropriate.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

### HEALING TIMEFRAME

- A simple radial head or neck fracture usually heals very well
- Healing times may vary, but on average total healing can take 6 – 12 weeks.

### GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

- Remove the sling for short periods as your pain settles, and aim to stop using it completely as soon as you feel able.
- Maintain gentle movements of your elbow when possible to prevent stiffness and increase time to recovery
- Gradually resume daily activities as pain allows
- Avoid forcible stretching of your elbow and lifting heavy items
- It can take 3 – 6 weeks for symptoms to settle completely. There may be slightly reduced range of your elbow, however this is unlikely to affect your function.
- If after 2 weeks you are unable to rotate your wrist in both directions, please see your GP for advice.

### PAIN RELIEF AND COMFORT

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory medication can be used.

### When can I...?

Play sport	12 weeks
Lift heavy items	6 – 12 weeks
Return to work	Consult your doctor
Drive	Consult your doctor

*The above timeframes are a guide only and do not apply to all radial head or neck fractures.*