

Radial Head or Neck Fractures (Non-displaced)

Fact Sheet

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.

Your fracture

The radius is one of two bones in the forearm that 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 of the radius.

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.

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 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.

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).