Radial Head / Radial Neck Fracture

You have a small fracture in the head or neck of your radius, which is one of the bones in your elbow. Treatment is with a pressure bandage and a sling.

Summary

- You have a small fracture of the radius bone at the level of the elbow.
- This type of injury almost always heals well without any loss of function.
- A routine follow-up is not necessary for this type of injury.
- It is important that you remove the sling and pressure bandage after a maximum of one week (if pain allows this) and that you start exercising to avoid stiffness in the elbow.
- To prevent the elbow from getting stiff, it is important that you start moving the elbow again as soon as possible.
- You can find exercises for your elbow in this information and in our Virtual Fracture Care app in the App store (iPhone) or Google Store (Android).
- If you have any questions, or are experiencing problems with your recovery, you can call the 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00 uur.

Treatment

A fracture of the radial head or neck is a common injury. The fracture is treated with a pressure bandage and a sling.

0-1 week

- Wear a sling, remove it as soon as your pain allows this.
- Wear a pressure bandage, remove it as soon as your pain allows this.

1-4 weeks

- Start exercises: bend, extend and rotate your arm.
- Move your arm as much as your pain allows.

4-6 weeks

- Move your elbow in all directions, when your pain allows it.

After 6 weeks

- You can start sports.

Instructions

Follow these instructions for a good recovery.

- Wear a pressure bandage and sling, this will keep your arm in a comfortable position.
- You do not need the pressure bandage and sling after 1 week. We advise you to stop using the sling after 1 week, if the pain allows you to do so. If you are still experiencing a lot of pain after one week, you can wear the pressure bandage for another week.
- You can replace the pressure bandage yourself. You can use the pressure bandage you are wearing it now, or you can buy a new bandage at the pharmacy. You can find instructions on how to apply the pressure bandage in our Virtual Fracture Care app and in this video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ad1AqmtpR0&t=6s).
- This fracture is close to your elbow joint. Start bending and extending your arm as soon as your pain allows you to do this. This will prevent the elbow from getting stiff. You can find exercises in our Virtual Fracture Care app and in this information.
- Are you in pain? Use a mild pain killer such as acetaminophen. Do not wait with the use of acetaminophen until the pain is too much.

Recovery

- This type of injury almost always heals well with time and use.- no specific treatment is required and routine follow-up is not necessary.
- It is possible that after 4-6 weeks, the range of motion of your elbow is still slightly reduced. This is unlikely to affect your long-term function and will improve in the months after.
- Physiotherapy is not necessary. If you are not satisfied with the function of your elbow after 6 weeks, you can ask for a referral to a physiotherapist from your general practitioner. However, a referral is not required.
- Does the pain increase, or does it not improve? Please contact the 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline). See also the information at the bottom of this page.

Reapply the pressure bandage

In this video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ad1AqmtpR0&t=6s) and in our Virtual Fracture Care app you can find instructions on how to reapply the pressure bandage. You can buy new materials at the pharmacy or reuse the materials from the emergency department.

Exercises

After a fracture in the elbow stiffness and loss of strength can occur. The following exercises can support your recovery.

Follow the instructions below:

- Practice at least 3 times a day and repeat each exercise 10 times.
- You can perform the exercises in warm water.
- Use your hand as normal as possible, this also exercises the elbow.

Elbow bend and straighten

After 1 week, you can start to bend and straighten the elbow. Bend and straighten your elbow so you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist. Do not push into pain. When you can successfully perform this exercise, you can start to bend and straighten the elbow without the use of your other arm.

Forearm rotations

After 4 weeks, you can start forearm rotations. Put your elbow at your side, do not hold it in the air. Bend your elbow to 90 degrees. Slowly rotate your palm up and down until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist if necessary. Do not push into pain.

Virtual Fracture Care app

In our Virtual Fracture Care app, you can find more information about your injury. You can also find exercises here to improve your recovery. You can find the app in the Appstore (iPhone) and in the Google Store (Android). You can also scan the QR-code, automatically you will be transferred to the app.

Questions? Please call the 'Breuklijn'

If there are any questions after reading this information, please call the 'Breuklijn' (fracture hotline) on workdays between 10.00-12.00.

Gerelateerde informatie

Specialismen

- Spoedeisende Geneeskunde (https://www.antoniusziekenhuis.nl/spoedeisende-geneeskunde)
- Chirurgie (https://www.antoniusziekenhuis.nl/chirurgie)

Contact Spoedeisende Geneeskunde T 088 320 33 00