



Broken collarbone

You came to the emergency department with an injury to your shoulder. An X-ray showed a break in your collarbone (clavicle). This sheet explains how it heals and how to care for it at home.

What is it?

The collarbone runs from the base of your neck to your shoulder. It usually breaks after a fall onto the shoulder or an outstretched arm. Most breaks heal well with a sling and time, without surgery. Healing takes about 6 to 12 weeks in adults, and less in children. A bump often forms where the bone heals; this is normal.

Looking after yourself at home

- Wear the sling for comfort, usually for 1 to 3 weeks, as your doctor advised.
- Take the sling off a few times a day to gently move your elbow, wrist and fingers.
- Put an ice pack wrapped in a cloth on the area for 20 minutes, several times a day, for the first few days.
- Sleeping propped up on pillows may be more comfortable.
- Do not lift anything heavy or play contact sports until your doctor says it is safe.
- Do not drive until you can move your arm freely without pain.

Medicines

- Paracetamol or ibuprofen can help with pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Avoid ibuprofen if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some types of asthma, or are pregnant, unless your doctor says it is safe.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or the fracture clinic within 1 to 2 weeks, or as arranged.
- Start gentle shoulder exercises when your doctor or physiotherapist tells you to.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Numbness, tingling, or weakness in your arm or hand
- Your hand or fingers turn pale, blue, or cold
- The skin over the break becomes tight, broken, or the bone pushes against it
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Pain that keeps getting worse despite pain relief



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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