



Broken bone (fracture)

You came to the emergency department with an injury, and an X-ray showed a broken bone (fracture). It has been treated today, for example with a cast, splint or sling. This sheet explains how to look after it while it heals.

What is it?

A fracture is a break or crack in a bone. Most broken bones heal well in about 6 to 8 weeks if they are kept in the right position. Pain and swelling are usually worst in the first few days. A cast or splint holds the bone still so it can heal. Some fractures need a check X-ray or specialist review in the following days.

Looking after yourself at home

- Raise the injured arm or leg above the level of your heart as much as you can for the first 2 to 3 days.
- Move your fingers or toes often, and any joints not in the cast.
- Keep the cast or splint dry. Cover it with a plastic bag when washing.
- Do not push anything inside the cast to scratch, and do not cut or remove it yourself.
- Use crutches or a sling as shown, and do not put weight on the injury unless told you can.
- Do not drive until your doctor says it is safe.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help the pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen may also help, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid it with a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some asthma, or pregnancy.
- If you were given stronger painkillers, they can cause drowsiness and constipation. Take them only as prescribed.

Follow-up

- Go to the fracture clinic or follow-up appointment you were given, even if you feel well.
- See your family doctor or health centre if the cast becomes loose, cracked, soft or rubs your skin.
- Ask when you can return to work, sport and driving.

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

- The limb looks deformed, or bone is showing
- Numbness, tingling, or the limb turns pale or blue
- Severe or worsening pain and swelling
- The cast feels too tight, or you cannot move the fingers or toes
- A painful, swollen calf, or sudden chest pain or breathlessness
- Fever, or a bad smell or fluid coming from under the cast



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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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