Royal United Hospitals Bath
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice after a soft tissue injury of the elbow

Fracture Clinic Patient Information Leaflet

Your injury

A ‘soft tissue’ injury means that you have had damaged some of the structures that support the elbow, such as the ligaments. You have strained your elbow joint but you do not have any broken bones. This is a common injury.

The usual symptoms following this type of injury include:

- Pain straight after an injury
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Difficulty moving the elbow or forearm



Your treatment plan

You may be given a sling to support your arm; this should be used for 2 to 4 weeks whilst the injury heals. Wear the sling during the day but remove it for exercises and personal hygiene. You can wear it at night time if you find it more comfortable but you don’t have to.

As your pain improves, you will be able to move your arm more comfortably. These injuries almost always heal well with time and therefore follow up clinic appointments are not always needed.

What should I do at home?

- Use over the counter pain killers as required.
- Elevate the injured arm in a sling or on pillows at night.
- Use ice over the injured area to help with pain and swelling for the first 24 hours – an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel can be used for 10 minutes at a time.
- You should not drive whilst in a sling.
- You can return to work once you are able to do your normal duties.

How long will it take to heal?

Most soft tissue injuries heal without any problems in about six weeks. However, it may take a few months for your symptoms to settle – these can include pain or discomfort, stiffness, decreased strength, and swelling. The injury may take longer to heal if you suffer from diabetes or if you smoke.

For advice on stopping smoking please visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree or discuss this with your GP.

On some occasions people might be referred to their local physiotherapy department for assessment, advice and rehabilitation.

Exercises

You should try to do these exercises three to four times a day; you can start them immediately.

Repeat these ten times each:

1. Gently bend your elbow as far as you can, hold for 5-10 seconds, then gently straighten elbow as far as you can.



2. Whilst sitting, turn your palm upwards and then downwards ensuring your elbow is tucked into your side.



If you have any worries or concerns please contact one of the following:
Virtual Fracture Clinic Helpline 01225 821668 or Fracture Clinic 01225 826380

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.

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