

# Advice after a shoulder fracture (proximal humerus)

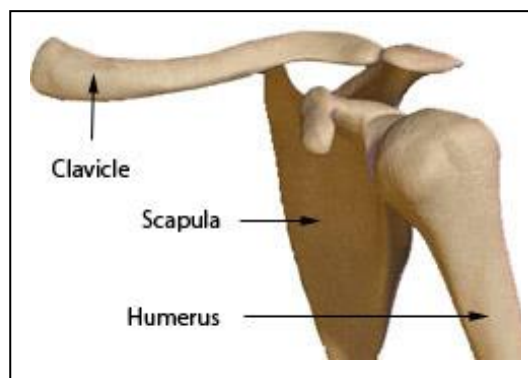
## Fracture Clinic Patient Information Leaflet

### Your injury

A fracture is the same as a break in the bone. The shoulder joint is made up of your upper arm bone (the humerus) and shoulder blade (the scapula). You have a break of the upper or 'proximal' part of your humerus bone, this is a common fracture.

The common symptoms following this type of fracture include:

- Pain straight after an injury
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Difficulty moving the arm
- Deformity at the site of injury



### Your treatment plan

You will be given a sling to support your arm; this will be used for 2 to 6 weeks whilst the injury heals. You need to keep the sling on at all times to start with, including at night, but you can remove it daily for personal hygiene and dressing. You should regularly move the elbow and wrist.

The shoulder joint does not respond well to being injured and you are likely to have long-term stiffness in your shoulder. Following this type of injury the main aim is to regain enough movement to perform day to day activities. You are likely to require physiotherapy.

## What should I do at home?

- Use over the counter pain killers as required.
- You may find it easier to sleep propped up with pillows.
- Use ice over the injured area to help with pain and swelling – 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 as soon as you are able to perform your normal duties.

## How long will it take to heal?

Most fractures heal without any problems in six to twelve weeks. However, it may take six to twelve months for your symptoms to settle completely – these can include pain or discomfort, stiffness, decreased strength, swelling and loss of muscle bulk. The bones 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](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) or discuss this with your GP.

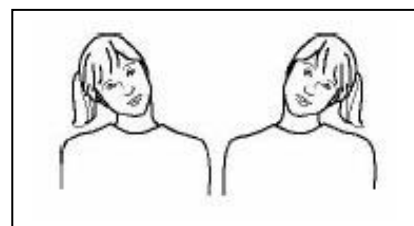
Once the fracture has started to heal some people might be referred to their local physiotherapy department for assessment, advice and rehabilitation.

## Exercises

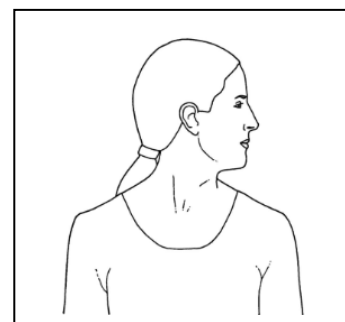
You should try to do these exercises three to four times a day. Unless told otherwise, you can start them once the pain from the shoulder starts to improve.

**Repeat these ten times each:**

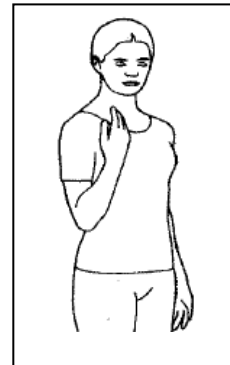
1. Tilt your head toward one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat to the other side.



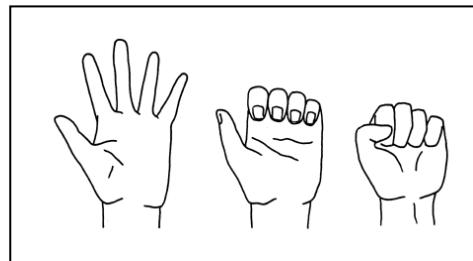
2. Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat to the other side.



3. Bend your elbow as far as you can, hold for 5-10 seconds, then straighten elbow as far as you can for 5-10 seconds and hold.



4. Separate and straighten your fingers. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Bend your fingers at the knuckles. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Make a fist. Hold for 5-10 seconds.



**If you have any worries or concerns please contact one of the following:**

**Virtual Fracture Clinic Helpline 01225 821668 or Fracture Clinic 01225 825602**

Trauma and Orthopaedic Department

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust  
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG  
01225 428331 [www.ruh.nhs.uk](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email [ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.PatientAdviceandLiaisonService@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656.