

## Pulled Elbow

### Contact Details

If you have any questions please telephone the RUH Emergency Department on

**01225 824000 (day)**

**01225 825015 (night)**

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.

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## How does a child sustain a pulled elbow?

Pulled elbow is an injury suffered by children usually between the age of one and five years old. It is the result of a sharp jerk or pulling action on your child's arm below the elbow. After the injury your child is often reluctant to use or move the arm.

## Is it a dislocation?

No. The bones are in the right place. Due to your child's bones not being fully matured it is possible for ligaments to slip over one of the arm bones (called the radius), making it difficult and painful for the child to move the elbow.

## Does my child need an x-ray?

Usually not. If the doctor or nurse practitioner is very sure that the injury is a pulled elbow, an x-ray is not necessary, as there is no injury to the bones.

## What can be done?

In most cases a simple manoeuvre of the arm will relocate the ligament. The manoeuvre can be painful for a second, but then your child will be able to move their elbow again. We often will leave them for a few minutes to go and play with toys and you will find they start to use the arm again. Occasionally it does not work the first time and the manoeuvre may be tried again or your child may be reviewed the next day.

## What do I need to do on leaving the Emergency Department?

Avoid anyone pulling the arm.

Give simple pain relief medication (paracetamol liquid) if your child appears to have some discomfort still. This should only be required for a day or two.

## Will it happen again?

It might, if your child's arm is tugged hard again. However after about the age of five years it is unlikely to happen again as the bones at the elbow are more mature.

