

Broken Collar Bone

What kind of injury do I have?

The collar bone is known medically as the clavicle, it is the bone which spans from the tip of the shoulder to the base of your throat. It is commonly broken when you fall onto your shoulder in accidents such as falling from your bicycle. This may be the only injury you have or just one of many, such as lacerations and abrasions.

What symptoms should I have?

Broken collar bones can be very painful particularly any time you try to move. You may have quite a bit of swelling along the line of your collar bone and this swelling may move or change (if the break is unstable).

What is the treatment?

A large number of these breaks can be treated simply by having your arm in a sling for a week or two and then gradually returning to full function. If the break is in the middle part of the collar bone, the bone ends have not moved too far apart and are not pushing into the skin or other structures, then the best treatment is a sling or collar and cuff sling.

Where there are complications such as pushing into the skin, too much movement or the break is at either end of the bone then surgery is often the best option. You should seek advice from an Orthopaedic Surgeon and consider the pros and cons before deciding if surgery is the right option for you.

Instructions:

How do I sleep?

Even when you have good pain relief medication the first night is usually the worst for discomfort. Each break will behave differently. Often sleeping while sitting up and having pillows arranged under and around your chest allows the arm to hang in a controlled way and prevents you from rolling over onto the broken side. After the first 24-48 hours the discomfort and unpleasant catching sensation drops off significantly.

How long does it take to heal?

You will feel much better after 2-3 weeks and will be able to use your arm for most daily tasks. You should still not be lifting any heavy objects. The bone itself takes many months to fully remodel. Returning to contact sport is something you need to discuss with your doctor, physiotherapist and coaches as you will be at risk of re-fracture. If rapid return to sport is a priority for you then you should see an Orthopaedic Surgeon within the first week of injury.

See your doctor immediately if:

- You develop any shortness of breath or suddenly feel very unwell or faint.
- You develop tingling or weakness in your arm which is new and not known to your treating clinician.
- Feel that the bones have moved significantly and are for example pointing under the skin.

Seeking help:



In a medical emergency go to your nearest emergency department or call 000.



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