

Fractured Supracondylar of the Elbow

Patient information - Orthopaedic & Paediatric Departments



This is a common injury in children and is often the result of a fall.

The injury usually involves displacement of the bones about the elbow and a great deal of swelling around the elbow.

Often these injuries need to be treated with an operation to put the bones back in place. Occasionally this can be done by manipulating the bones back into place, while the child is under a general anaesthetic.

More commonly, however, it requires a small cut on one or both sides of the elbow and the insertion of some wires. These are usually buried underneath the skin. A backslab (half plaster) is then applied to hold and support the arm.

It is important after surgery to keep the arm elevated on pillows, above the heart and to 'pump' the fingers. This will decrease pain and swelling.

Make sure the child has regular pain relief – Panadol, Panadeine or Codeine are best. Take only as prescribed by the doctor. Read the Care of the Cast instructions carefully and if you have any concerns once you have gone home, telephone the Orthopaedic Outpatients Department (03) 364 0800 and ask to speak to a Registered nurse.

At your first visit to the Orthopaedic Outpatient Department, your child will probably have a check of the wound and a new cast applied. The wires in the elbow are removed between 4 and 6 weeks after the injury, once the bone has healed sufficiently. These are taken out under a general anaesthetic and it is usual to come into the hospital just for the day, for this to occur.

Your child can go back to school once the pain has settled down and the limb no longer feels swollen – about a week after the injury. It is best to keep the arm in a sling or collar and cuff to stop it being knocked while at school.



For more information about:

- your health and medication, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz
- hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz