



Elbow Injury

Paediatric Management Advice Leaflet

What is an elbow injury?

Elbow soft tissue injuries occur when there is an injury to the tendon, ligament or muscle that surround and support the joint.

What are the symptoms?

A soft tissue injury to the elbow may result in the following:

- Pain around the joint
- Pain with movement
- Reduced movement and stiffness
- Bruising around the elbow



Pain relief

Consult your GP or local pharmacist for advice as to which medication is suitable for your child to take.

Important signs and symptoms to look out for

If your child experiences any of the following symptoms, please seek further urgent medical advice:

- Worsening swelling not improved by elevation and rest
- Worsening, severe pain in the elbow
- Regular or constant severe night pain
- Night sweats
- Loss of sensation, persistent pins and needles/numbness and altered strength and control in the forearm or hand
- Altered colour or unusual sweating around the elbow
- Increased temperature or feeling hot and shivery may indicate an infection

Only continue to read if you have none of the above symptoms

Recovery and Rehabilitation

Healing times

- Elbow soft tissue injuries will usually heal within a few weeks. **Swelling** and **bruising** may still be present for up to 10 days.
- Normal activity levels are usually restored after 6-8 weeks. The risk of re-injury is higher in the first 4-6 weeks.
- As your child completes the exercises provided they may notice some aching. This is normal. There is no need to stop playing or exercising unless it is causing significant pain.

Initial Management

- If your child has hurt their elbow, you can care for them at home using first aid principles (**the Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation (RICE) strategy**) and ankle exercises. Treatment should start immediately and continue for the next 2 to 3 days.
- **Rest** - rest the injured elbow and initially avoid activities that cause a lot of pain.
- **Ice** - apply ice to the injured area for 10 to 15 minutes wrapped in a towel (be cautious of ice burns). Ice the injury every 2 to 4 hours for 2 to 3 days when your child is awake.
- **Compression** - use a firm bandage that is not too tight and does not stop circulation or cause extra pain. The bandage should cover from just above the elbow down to just below the elbow. This should be worn for 2 to 3 days when your child is awake.
- **Elevation**- If you have been given a sling, use it to keep your injured area elevated. You may find it more comfortable to use pillows to elevate it during the evening and at night.

Physiotherapy

- It is important to keep your child's elbow moving even when painful. Evidence has shown that completing basic exercises helps the elbow to heal.
- Elbows get stiff very quickly so it is important to start the exercises below as soon as possible.
- In most cases your child will not need to be seen by a Physiotherapist for rehabilitation. Following the exercises provided in the leaflet will aid with recovery.
- If after 6 weeks your child is still having problems, please contact the Paediatric Physiotherapy service on the number provided to book an assessment.

Exercises — Phase 1 — Movement

Completing the below exercises will help maintain range of movement. Try to complete the exercises 3-4 times per day and use your elbow normally as pain allows.



Elbow flexion and extension

Lying down, slowly bend and straighten your elbow. Repeat 10-15 times.

Assisted elbow flexion and extension

In standing, slowly bend and straighten your elbow by using your other arm to assist with the movement. Repeat 10-15 times.



Elbow flexion and extension

In standing, slowly bend and straighten your elbow. Repeat 10-15 times.

Exercises — Phase 2 — Strengthening

Once you are able to complete the exercises in phase 1 comfortably, progress to phase 2.

Elbow extension with small weight

In standing, holding a small weight such as a small filled water bottle, slowly lift the weight from your shoulders to overhead. Repeat 10 times.



Biceps curl with small weight

In standing, holding a small weight, such as a small filled water bottle, with your arms straight, slowly bend your elbows and move the weight towards your shoulders. Repeat 10 times.



Shoulder press up against a wall

Standing with your hands against a wall - just wider apart than your shoulders: Slowly bend your elbows so that your chest moves towards the wall. Hold for 3 seconds before slowly returning back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.

Exercises — Phase 3 — Further strengthening and proprioception

Once you can complete phase 2, move onto phase 3. To help prevent further injuries, it is important to work on progressive strengthening and proprioception. Proprioception is the perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body.

Throw and catch against a wall

Stand in front of a wall holding a ball. Slowly throw the ball with your sore arm to the wall and try and catch it with either one or both hands. Repeat 10 times.



Triceps dip

In sitting, extend your arms behind you with your palms flat on the bed. Slowly bend your elbows, so that your back is lowered and back up again. Don't let your back touch the bed. Repeat 10 times.

If you need any further information or you feel that you need further intervention please contact the paediatric physiotherapy department on: 01282 803587 or email paeds.physiotherapy@elht.nhs.uk

If you require this [document](#) in an alternative format or language, please contact paeds.physiotherapy@elht.nhs.uk

Polish

W celu otrzymania tego [dokumentu](#) w innym formacie lub języku, prosimy o kontakt z paeds.physiotherapy@elht.nhs.uk

Punjabi

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Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کی ایک متبادل شکل (فارمیٹ) یا زبان میں ضرورت ہے تو براہ مہربانی رابطہ کریں

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Bengali

আপনি যদি এই প্রচারণটি অন্য কোন আকারে বা অন্য ভাষায় চান, তাহলে যোগাযোগ করবেন

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Romanian

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paeds.physiotherapy@elht.nhs.uk

Lithuanian

Norint gauti šį dokumentą kitu formatu ar kita kalba, prašome susisiekti su mumis

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