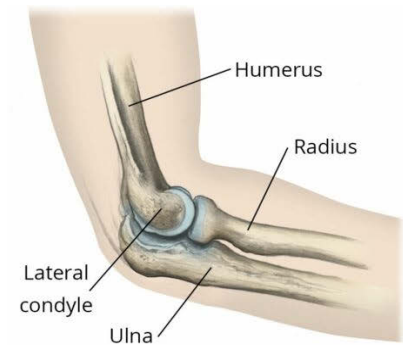




Elbow Fractures

Throughout childhood, children often fall. Whether your child is an athlete or just playing around, injuries are a part of growing up. In most cases, falls are harmless, but there are occasions when a fall results in a serious injury. Most elbow fractures occur when a child falls on an outstretched arm with a lot of force from the fall. This impact can cause a fracture or break near the elbow. It is important to have these injuries evaluated by a medical professional soon after injury to prevent complications.



What bones make up the elbow?

There are three bones that create the elbow joint. Three bones, along with the ligaments, tendons and muscles allow the elbow to move like a hinge, bending and straightening. The big bone is the humerus, which makes up the upper part of the arm. The radius and the ulna are the two bones of the forearm (or lower arm). The radius bone runs along the side of the thumb and the ulna bone runs along the side of the small finger.

Types of Elbow Fractures

There are several types of elbow fractures. The most common include:

Supracondylar Fractures - This is a break in the humerus bone, just above the elbow. This fracture is the most common elbow fracture in children under eight years of age, but also the most serious since it can cause problems with circulation and nerve function.

Condyle Fractures - These are breaks of the bony prominences on each side of the elbow. The most common is a break on the outside or Lateral Condyle.

Olecranon Fractures - These breaks occur on the bony tip of the elbow. With little muscle or soft tissue covering the bone, it is a common fracture with direct fall onto the elbow.

Radial Neck Fractures - These are a break of one of the forearm bones near the elbow joint. This fracture is common in children who fall on an outstretched hand. The force of the fall is transmitted from the hand, up the arm to the elbow joint.

Fracture Dislocation - A dislocation at the top of the radius bone with a fracture of the ulna bone is called a Monteggia fracture.



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Treatment for Elbow Fractures

There are several different treatment options depending on the fracture that occurred and how severe it is. If the fracture is not displaced, a cast will be applied for a period of 4 to 6 weeks with periodic x-rays. It is important to keep the follow-up appointments to ensure proper healing. If the fracture is displaced, a "reduction" will be required or the bones will need to be pushed back into place. Most children regain their motion 1 to 2 months after the cast is removed. Children are usually restricted from sports for about 4 weeks after cast removal to prevent reinjury. In most cases, physical therapy is not required.

If successful reduction is not achieved, or if the fracture moves out of place after reduction, surgery may be required. Surgery includes placing the bones back into place in the operating room with hardware, such as pins, screws, and/or wires.