

# Clavicle Fracture



## What is it?

A clavicle fracture is a break in the collar bone. Your collar bone is one of the main bones in your shoulder, it connects your arm to your body. Clavicle fractures are common and may happen while playing sport, after a fall or after a hit to the shoulder.

A clavicle fracture can be very painful and may make it hard to move your arm. Treatment depends on the type of fracture. Mild fractures usually need limited movement and wearing a sling, brace or splint to support your arm. Severe fractures may need surgery. Your GP will determine the best treatment for you.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will want to know how your fracture happened. They may also look for other fractures, bruising, and swelling. Your GP may want to check how well you breathe and may also arrange an X-ray, CT scan or MRI. Your GP will talk to you about your symptoms and how to look after your arm.

Treatment may include:

- Arm support
- Icing the area for 20 minutes at a time
- Pain medication
- Physical therapy

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- When can I start using my arm?*
- How often should I see you for a follow-up?*
- Will I need surgery?*
- How long will it take for me to improve?*



## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you two weeks after your first visit to check for swelling. They will see how your shoulder moves. Your GP may refer you to a specialist called a physiotherapist who can help you recover.

Your GP will also want to see you six weeks after your first visit to check on how your range of movement is improving. Your GP may arrange an X-ray to check your bone is healing properly. If it is not, your GP will refer you to a specialist called an orthopaedic surgeon.

It is good to follow up with your GP twelve weeks after your first visit to see how your shoulder is recovering. Your GP will let you know when you can return to active work and sport.

## What can I do?

Your GP will let you know what elbow, hand and wrist exercises you should do to help your bone heal. You should avoid doing any activity which involves putting your arm over your head for six weeks. You can relieve the pain using pain medication, and ice.

Healing may take longer in diabetics or in people who smoke. Once your fracture has fully healed, you can safely return to sport and active work. It is common to have a bump after your collar bone has healed.

## What supports are available?

You can ask your GP for a referral to a private orthopaedic surgeon specialising in shoulder injuries.

## Where can I learn more?

- **HealthInfo** - Exercises for your shoulders: [healthinfo.org.nz](http://healthinfo.org.nz)
- **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons** – Clavicle fracture: [orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org)