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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Elbow Injury Advice

You have been diagnosed with an elbow injury. Even though there is no break in a bone on your X-ray, you still could have injured the soft tissues like muscles, tendons or ligaments around your elbow.

Ligaments (which are strong tissues around joints attaching bones together and giving support to the joints) can be injured, usually by being stretched during a sudden pull, and this causes inflammation, swelling, and bleeding (bruising) around the affected joint.

During the first few days your elbow may be swollen and painful so a sling may have been provided to rest your elbow in a comfortable position for a few days.

To help the natural healing process, please follow the advice below.

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rest your elbow for the first 24/48 hours after your injury but avoid long spells of not moving at all – you should move it gently for a couple of minutes every ½ hour when you are awake.• If you have been given a sling, keep your elbow in it when moving around. When sitting take it out of the sling and rest your elbow in a comfortable position, and move hand and wrist• If your elbow is swollen use ice packs or frozen peas wrapped in a towel for 15-20 minutes every 2 hours if you can.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use ice packs<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ over areas of skin that are in poor condition○ if you have poor sensation to cold○ if you know you have poor circulation.• Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn.• Don't leave an icepack on while you are asleep• Don't use ice for more than 20 minutes at a time - you won't be helping heal your injury any faster, and you can cause damage to the tissue• Don't try to force your elbow to be straight - is likely to cause pain and delay your recovery.• Don't carry heavy objects, or strain the elbow initially for the first few weeks• Play contact or racquet sports until your elbow is free of pain and feels strong.

Exercises

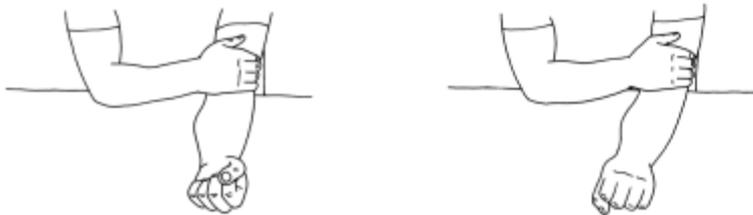
Begin these flexibility exercises as soon as you can - provided they don't cause excessive pain - as they are designed to mobilise the joint, strengthen your muscles and so help you back to full function, flexibility and strength of your elbow. The repetitions and sets are a guideline; add an extra 1 or 2 repetitions every few days if you feel comfortable.

Remove your sling and exercise your shoulder, elbow, and wrist at least 4 times a day. It is important to keep gently moving the elbow as this will prevent stiffness and ensure the quickest return to normal use.

After 48 hours, try to use your arm more - exercise really helps your elbow and can relieve pain. Do whatever you normally would and stay at or return to work - this is important and is the best way to get better. You may need to adapt how you do things initially.

As your pain settles you may want to remove the sling completely - this can be done as soon as you feel able - and as your arm starts to feel more comfortable, gradually build up to heavier activities. Your injury may take up to 6 weeks to settle. Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less discomfort and good movement

1. Sit with the back of your hand resting on a table, turn your hand to face down on the table. Slowly return your hand to the starting position x10 3-4 times per day



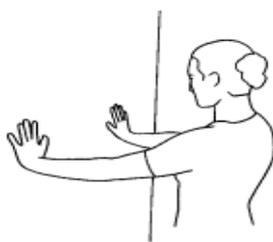
2. Stand up. Bend your elbow up towards you as far as possible



- If you can't do this because your elbow is too stiff, grasp the wrist/hand of the affected arm & gently help to bend then straighten it with your other hand. Feel the stretch and hold for 10 seconds. Start by doing 10 repetitions of each exercise, 3 -4 times a day.



- Lean against a wall with your fingers turned upwards. Slowly try to straighten your elbow, pushing your hand into the wall. Hold for 30 seconds then release. Repeat 5 times 3-4 times a day



When can I return to normal activities?

You can return to active hobbies and sport when you feel comfortable, build it up slowly and see how it feels after each session. Build these activities up gradually before returning to full training sessions and competition.

What should I take for pain?

No pain relief may be needed if the sprain is mild. However, painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then.

They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol.

With all the medications it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers (like Ibuprofen) can relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you shouldn't use them.

Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with gel, however, the amount of drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.

If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP, or self-refer to your local physiotherapy department or return to the Emergency Department/MIU where you were seen.

Physio self-referral link:

[Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Physiotherapy Service \(wales.nhs.uk\)](https://wales.nhs.uk)



If you are unable to do this electronically you should call 0300 3732539 between 8.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

References:

Elbow problems | NHS inform

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sprains-strains/#!scenario>

**If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant
Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287**

Or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**