



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Pulled Elbow

Issued by Accident & Emergency / Child Health



The following information has been written for parents / carers of children diagnosed with a 'pulled elbow'.

What is a Pulled Elbow?

The movement of one of the bones (the radius) out of its normal position from under a ligament in the elbow. It is a common condition in young children aged between 1 to 5 years old.

What causes it?

It is often the result of a sudden jerking or pulling action on the arm or forearm. For example, grabbing hold or swinging the child by the arm.

What are the symptoms?

Your child may be in sudden pain, cry or appear anxious and be unable to bend their elbow. They will be reluctant to use their arm, which may hang loosely at their side or across their tummy.

How is it diagnosed?

How it occurred and an examination of the arm will help to diagnose a 'pulled elbow', this does not show on x-ray. An x-ray will only be taken if there is a suspicion of a break or dislocation.

How is it treated?

Your child will often be given simple painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. A doctor or nurse practitioner will then move the bone back into place. This means that they will move (manipulate) the arm, which may be painful for a short period. A click is often felt as the bone slips back into place.

How will this treatment benefit my child?

Shortly after the manipulation your child should start to use their arm normally. It may take a little longer if it has been present for a while. Please encourage your child to use the arm again by playing with a toy.

Are there any risks involved?

The elbow may be painful after the injury / manipulation, painrelieving medicine, like paracetamol (calpol) or ibuprofen can be given. Please check the correct dose for your child. The details will be on the bottle / pack, follow the instructions as stated. If you are unsure of the dosage please ask the nurse, doctor or your local pharmacist.

Is there an alternative if this treatment does not work?

Sometimes, your child may not move their arm properly and we may have to move it a couple of times. However, if this is not successful an x-ray may be performed to rule out any other possible problems. If the x-rays are OK, we will advise resting the arm in a sling. It will normally get better itself within 2-3 days.

Can it happen again?

It is possible it may happen again, until your child is about 5 years old. This is when the bone in the elbow has grown enough to stop moving out of its ligament. Either elbow can be affected.

To help prevent a pulled elbow happening again, avoid lifting or pulling on your child's forearms. Avoid games where you swing or tug your child by the arms.

If it does happen again please return to your nearest A&E department.

Will my child need any follow up?

If the treatment is successful your child will not be seen again. If we have any concerns we will make an appointment to see your child again. They will be seen in the A&E soft-tissue review clinic 2-3 days later.

Contact

Should you have any questions or queries please ring 0844 811 8111 and ask for one of the following:

A&E Reception, Wansbeck General Hospital
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

A&E Reception, North Tyneside General Hospital
(Open from 8am to Midnight)

A&E Reception, Hexham Children's Unit, Wansbeck
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

Alnwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24hours)

Berwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24 hours)

Blyth Minor Injury Unit (Open from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

You can call NHS 111 for urgent medical advice 24/7.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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