Texas Children's Hospital®

Orthopedics

Elbow Fractures

Fractures of the upper arm bone near the elbow (supracondylar humerus fractures) are the most common elbow fracture in children and account for between 50 and 60% of pediatric elbow fractures.

Fractures of the lower arm bone at the elbow, also called lateral condyle fractures, are the next most common.

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS

Most elbow fractures happen after a fall on an outstretched hand. The elbow hyper extends, and the distal part of the humerus (the bone between the elbow and shoulder) above the elbow joint fracture.

SYMPTOMS AND TYPES

Symptoms of an elbow fracture include:

- Decreased elbow mobility
- Refusal to use arm
- Immediate onset of pain
- Deformity
- Swelling

DIAGNOSIS AND TESTS

A broken elbow will be diagnosed by taking X-rays.

TREATMENT AND CARE

Supracondylar humerus fractures are categorized by severity. After review by a doctor, treatment can be either casting or surgery depending on the severity of the fracture.

Undisplaced lateral condyle fractures require weekly X-rays to monitor the amount of displacement.

Displaced lateral condyle fractures do require surgery.

LIVING AND MANAGING

Most injuries are treated with a cast or surgery. A cast is usually in place for 3-4 weeks. After the cast is removed, movement of the elbow is encouraged.

MORE INFORMATION

Shrader, M. Wade. "Pediatric supracondylar fractures and pediatric physeal elbow fractures." *Orthopedic Clinics of North America* 39.2 (2008): 163-171.

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Need an appointment or have questions?
Call 832-822- 3100 for the Main Campus Clinic and Health Centers.
For our West Campus location, call 832-227-7678.

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