

Dislocated Elbow: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Your elbow may get forced out of its normal position (dislocated) if you fall on it or jar it hard. An elbow that is dislocated causes pain from the elbow to the hand. The doctor put your elbow back in its normal position. But you will still need to be careful, as it can more easily go out of position again.

Rest and home treatment can help you heal. Your doctor probably put a splint on your elbow to keep it in position while it heals. He or she may advise physical therapy to help you exercise your elbow and keep it flexible. If you injured muscles or tendons, you may need more treatment or surgery.

You may have had a sedative to help you relax. You may be unsteady after having sedation. It can take a few hours for the medicine's effects to wear off. Common side effects of sedation include nausea, vomiting, and feeling sleepy or tired.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away.**

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If the doctor gave you a sedative:
 - For 24 hours, don't do anything that requires attention to detail. This includes going to work, making important decisions, or signing any legal documents. It takes time for the medicine's effects to completely wear off.
 - For your safety, do not drive or operate any machinery that could be dangerous. Wait until the medicine wears off and you can think clearly and react easily.
- If your doctor put a splint on your elbow, wear the splint as directed. Do not remove it until your doctor says you can. While wearing a splint, wiggle your uninjured fingers, make a fist, or squeeze a soft ball to reduce swelling and stiffness.
- If you have an elastic bandage, make sure it is snug but not so tight that your arm gets numb or tingles. You can loosen the bandage if it is too tight or your hand swells.
- Prop up your elbow on a pillow when you ice it or anytime you sit or lie down during the next 3 days. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Rest your arm as much as you can. You may need to change your activities to avoid movements that irritate the elbow.
- If your elbow is swollen, put ice or a cold pack on it for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

- Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- If your doctor recommends exercises, do them as directed.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have trouble breathing.
- You passed out (lost consciousness).

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse nausea or vomiting.
- You have new or worse pain.
- Your hand or fingers are cool or pale or change color.
- Your cast or splint feels too tight.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your hand or fingers.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have problems with your cast or splint.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **Z507** in the search box to learn more about "**Dislocated Elbow: Care Instructions**".

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