

Forearm Fracture

What is a forearm fracture?

A fracture is a break in a bone. There are two bones in your forearm:

the radius (on the thumb side of your arm)

the ulna (on the little-finger side of your arm).

How does it occur?

A forearm fracture usually occurs from:

- ▶ a fall onto an outstretched arm or hand
- ▶ a direct blow to the arm.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are pain, swelling, and tenderness at the site of injury. You may not be able to move your arm normally.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine your forearm and look for tenderness. An x-ray of your arm will show the fracture.

How is it treated?

If the broken bone is crooked, your health care provider will straighten it. You will be given some

medicine first so the straightening is not too painful. Some fractures that cannot be straightened, or that are broken into many pieces, may need to have surgery.

You may be given a splint for your arm for a few days until the swelling begins to go down. Then your arm will be put in a cast for 4 to 8 weeks.

Your health care provider may prescribe anti-inflammatory medications or other pain medications.

You should elevate your arm on a pillow or the back of a chair as often as possible for the first 2 to 3 days. This will help control pain and swelling.

You may place ice packs over the cast for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 to 3 days. Take care not to get your cast wet if it is a plaster cast.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your health care provider if:

- ▶ Your pain is getting worse instead of better.
- ▶ You feel that your cast is too tight and you have swelling that doesn't get better when you elevate your injury.

How can I prevent a forearm fracture?

Most forearm fractures are caused by accidents that you cannot easily prevent.