



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: ELBOW FRACTURE (NONDISPLACED)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed a fracture (break) of a bone in your elbow. As with any broken bone, the injury is serious, and proper treatment is essential. Fortunately, the broken bone has not been pushed out of normal position (displaced), which makes treatment and healing easier.

Swelling and pain in the elbow occur with a fracture; the amount of each varies with individuals. Similarly, the amount of time your elbow will be difficult/painful to use varies.

The sling, applied at the Student Health Center, is essential to minimize pain and swelling, and to promote healing.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR ELBOW FRACTURE:

1. Keep your arm in the sling. The sling puts the elbow to rest.
2. Elevate the elbow above the level of your heart, especially the first 48 hours after injury. Elevation helps reduce swelling.
3. Apply cold packs to the elbow off and on the first 48 hours after the injury. Cold also helps minimize pain and swelling.
4. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a broken elbow. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
5. The provider may prescribe stronger pain medication. Take the prescription medicine only if needed; do not take the medication and perform dangerous activities such as driving a car or operating machinery.
6. Make a *prompt* follow-up appointment with your personal/referral orthopedic (bone) doctor. Be sure to tell the office that you have a broken elbow, and need a “work-in” appointment in the next few days. Pick up your X-rays before your appointment. The orthopedic doctor can follow the progress of healing, help minimize the possibility of long-term elbow problems, and assist you in returning to normal activities with the arm.