

Buckle fractures of the wrist in children

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What is a buckle fracture?

Buckle fractures (also known as Torus fractures) are very common injuries in children. A buckle fracture occurs when one side of the bone bends or is compressed but does not suffer a break. The other side of the bone remains intact. Buckle fractures only occur in children as the bones are still immature. The diagnosis is made by clinical examination and the typical appearance of a buckle fracture seen on X-rays.

What causes a buckle fracture of the wrist?

Buckle fractures occur most commonly when a child falls onto the outstretched wrist or hand.

What symptoms will my child have?

Buckle fractures are usually painful, but the pain is not usually severe. The child will not want to use the hand or wrist normally. The pain can be controlled with simple pain killers such as children's paracetamol or ibuprofen. You can ask the Emergency Department (ED) doctor or your GP for a prescription for painkillers or buy them over the counter at a chemist.

How are buckle fractures treated?

Buckle fractures heal very well on their own and are treated by wearing a soft plaster cast for approximately 3 weeks. The cast keeps the wrist comfortable and prevents further injury whilst the fracture is healing. After 3 weeks the plaster cast can be taken off and the child can use their hand normally. If the child appears pain-free before the 3 weeks are up, the cast can safely be removed.

The plaster cast used is a soft cast and will be applied by the plaster technicians. If your child has their injury when the plaster technicians are not on duty, a temporary plaster of Paris back slab will be applied in the Emergency Department. The plaster technicians will then contact you in 2 - 3 days to come back to the plaster room to have a soft cast applied.

If you have not heard from the plaster technicians in 2 working days, please contact them on **01271 349155**.

Most children start to use their wrist and hand again whilst still wearing the cast. The child should be allowed to use the hand as much as she or he wants to, but shouldn't do anything that causes pain or discomfort. He or she shouldn't take part in any sporting activity, including swimming, until the cast is removed.

Do I have to come back for a soft cast?

Not necessarily. If it is inconvenient for you to come back to Barnstaple to have the back slab changed to a soft cast, you can keep the back slab on for 3 weeks instead. The back slabs are less robust than a soft cast and cannot get wet. If you choose to keep the back slab on for 3 weeks but then have any problems, you can contact the plaster room technician on **01271 349155** in working hours for advice. New back slabs can be applied also at Bideford, Tyrrell and Stratton Minor Injury Units.

Do I need to come back to a clinic or see my GP?

As all buckle fractures heal very well, there is no need for a routine follow-up appointment. Simply remove the cast after 3 weeks. The plaster technicians will explain how to do this. If you have any concerns, call the plaster room on **01271 349155**. We are very happy to see you again if necessary.

What should I do if I have any concerns?

We would like to see you again if your child is still in pain after taking painkillers; if the cast is uncomfortable or breaks; if your child still has pain after the cast is removed or if you have any other concerns.

You can contact the plaster room to talk to the plaster technician in office hours on **01271 349155**. The plaster technician can give advice, see you in the plaster room or arrange follow up in the fracture clinic if necessary.

Alternatively, you can come back to the Emergency Department at any time.

If you are no longer in North Devon you should get in touch with your GP or local Emergency Department.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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