



Pulled or nursemaid's elbow (child) discharge advice

Your child has attended the Emergency Department with a pulled elbow. This leaflet explains what it is, how it is treated.

What is nursemaid's elbow?

This is a common injury in children, particularly between the age of one and four, and is caused by having their arm pulled, e.g. falling over while an adult is holding their hand.

The radius, one of the bones in the elbow, moves out of place and causes the child pain and they stop using their arm. It is also called dislocated elbow, pulled elbow, slipped elbow, or toddler elbow. The medical term for nursemaid's elbow is radial head subluxation.



How is it treated?

The doctor or nurse practitioner can put the bone back in the correct place but it is momentarily painful while this is carried out. While a child with nursemaid's elbow has some initial pain in the arm, the injury does not cause any long-term damage. Once the bone is back in place (usually without the need of any pain medications), the symptoms go away quickly.

Occasionally, the radius does not slip back easily and so your child will be put into a sling when usually the bone will go back into place by itself. In this case, you will be asked to return and be reviewed by a senior doctor.

Some children are prone to this injury and it occurs easily and commonly so adults should not feel guilty if it happens while they are holding the child's hand. As children grow, the radius changes shape and pulled elbows no longer occur. It is rare in children over six years of age.

Preventing further pulled elbows

No permanent damage occurs from a pulled elbow. However, it can reoccur and so parents and other children need to try not to pull or swing the child by his or her arm.

Siblings can also be prone to this injury and it can happen on either arm.

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

You can also pick up a copy of the Trust leaflet called 'Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)', which explains how you can raise concerns or give feedback on your experience.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – 'Overall, how was your experience of our service?' – by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Paediatric Emergency Department

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