



Radial Head Fracture Nonoperative Treatment

Patient Instructions

Laith Al-Shihabi, MD

0-1 week

Pain medication:

- Use your prescription pain medication as needed to control pain.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotic/opioid pain medication.
- Unless you cannot take them for other medical reasons, it is ok to use over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Advil or Aleve) in addition to your prescription pain medication. Do not take tylenol as your prescription already contains this medication.

Splint:

- A splint or sling may have been placed by the emergency department or your primary doctor; this can stay in place until your visit with Dr. Al-Shihabi

Motion:

- Start moving your fingers as soon as possible.
- You can use your hand for light activity, such as eating, drinking, or using a computer.
- Do not lift, carry, push, or pull anything heavier than a glass of water or can of soda.

1-2 weeks (First visit)

Splint:

- You will be placed in to a removable long-arm splint by hand therapy as your swelling allows.
- The splint should be worn full-time except for therapy and therapy exercises

Motion:

- Therapy will be started for elbow, wrist, and hand motion.
- Continue to avoid lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling anything heavier than a glass of water.

2-6 weeks (Second visit)

Splint:

- Continue use of the splint full-time when not performing therapy exercises until 4 weeks.
- Wean from the splint starting at 4 weeks. You can continue using it for protection or with activities that cause pain.

Motion:

- Gentle finger and grip strengthening with putty can be started at 3 weeks.
- Continue to avoid lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling anything heavier than a glass of water.
- Gentle forearm and elbow passive stretching can be started at 4 weeks.

6 -10 weeks (Third visit)

Splint:

-Wean from use and discontinue by 8 weeks if you have not already done so.

Motion:

- Continue elbow range of motion, including stretching.
- Begin gentle elbow strengthening at 8 weeks.
- You can lift/carry up to 10-20 lbs (about 1/2 gallon of milk) as your symptoms allow at 8 weeks.
- You can lift/carry to tolerance starting at 10 weeks.
- Transition to a home exercise program at 6-8 weeks.

10-12 weeks (Fourth visit)

Splint:

-No longer needed.

Motion:

-Continue elbow and forearm strengthening at home

12+ weeks

Gradually return to light activity and exercise. There are no further activity restrictions at this time. No further therapy is necessary unless required on a case-by-case basis.