



Olecranon Fracture

What is an olecranon fracture?

An olecranon fracture occurs on the ulna, one of the long bones of the forearm that extends from the wrist to the elbow. The olecranon is the part of the ulna at the pointy end of the elbow, and a fracture is a break in this part of the bone. This kind of fracture often goes into the joint of the elbow.

This injury occurs most often from a fall directly onto the arm or a direct blow, like falls off a scooter, skates or monkey bars, as well as direct hits in sports like football, hockey or lacrosse.

How is this injury treated?

These fractures are usually either displaced, meaning the bone has separated, or non-displaced, meaning the bone fragments did not move. Your child's x-ray will show the size of the break. If the bone is displaced, your child will likely need surgery, which will bring the bone back into the right position for it to heal properly.

If your child does not need surgery, we often put the injured arm in a cast. In order to leave room for swelling, your child will probably start with a bivalved (split) cast on their arm. The sides of the cast are taped with cloth medical tape, which you can buy at the pharmacy and replace if the tape begins to peel off. You may also use cloth athletic tape or duct tape, but avoid these if your child has a latex allergy. The cast is held tightly in place from the inside, so it should not fall apart if the tape does start to peel. We do not usually use waterproof material for these first casts due to swelling.

After casting for three to four weeks, we usually stop immobilization (casting) and may provide a hinged brace for the elbow. It is important to begin moving the arm again to keep it from getting stiff and to help bring it back to full and normal movement.

Will my child be in pain?

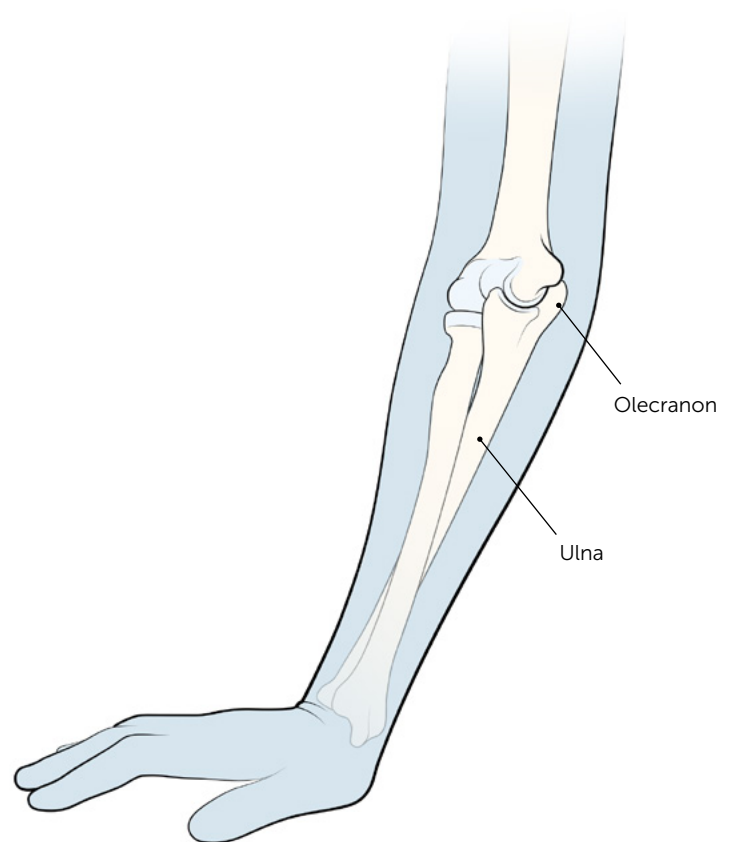
Soreness is usually at its worst in the first few days through the first week. Pain from soreness can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) as needed. **Always talk with your provider about allergies your child may have before giving over-the-counter medication.**

Swelling in the fingers is common. Help your child keep the arm and hand lifted or resting above the heart to help with swelling.

Can my child be active?

While the cast provides some protection, a blow to the arm could make the injury worse. Your child should not do any activities where there is a risk of falling or taking a direct hit to the arm. This includes activities like:

- playing on playground structures (i.e. jungle gyms or swing sets)
- contact sports like basketball, hockey or soccer
- horseback riding, ice skating or skiing



How long will my child be out of sports?

We will assess your child and make recommendations based on how the fracture looks and the injury risks of the sport your child plays. This kind of injury usually keeps patients out of contact sports for about six to 12 weeks.

After the cast comes off, your child should use their arm to bring back full strength and motion while waiting to return to sports or playground activities.

