

Pulled elbow in a child

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because your child has been diagnosed with a pulled elbow. This type of injury may also be called a radial head subluxation, nursemaid's elbow, or annular ligament displacement.

What is a pulled elbow?

A pulled elbow is a common minor injury which usually affects children under the age of 6 years. It occurs when one of the forearm bones, called the radius, partially slips out of a ring-shaped ligament at the elbow,

A pulled elbow occurs because young children's joints are not completely developed, and the ring-shaped ligament is looser at this age.

It may happen when the arm has been stretched or pulled forcefully along the direction of the length of the arm like pulling a child up, swinging them by the hands or jerking an arm when holding a toddler's hand while walking.

How can it be treated?

If your child seems to be in pain, they should be given simple pain killers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Once the examination has shown no other injuries (sometimes an X ray may be needed) your child's arm will need to be moved in a particular way to manipulate the head of the radius bone back into the correct position. This is a quick and simple manoeuvre but may cause a brief moment of discomfort. Often a click is felt as the bone slips back into position.

Normally your child will be able to use the arm very quickly after the treatment, however this may take 30 minutes or longer if the pulled elbow has been present for a while.

It is not always possible to solve the problem by performing this manoeuvre the first time. In these cases, the arm is usually rested in a sling and you will need to bring your child back to see us again in the next day or two.

Often the problem gets better itself in this period, if not, we may need to make another attempt to move the elbow.

Following discharge

Usually, your child will not need pain relief medication but if the elbow was 'out' for a while, then your child may need some pain relief medication on the day of the treatment. If your child is not moving their arm fully by the next day, they will need to return either to a Minor Injuries Unit or Emergency Department.

Children who have had a pulled elbow might get it again. This can be prevented by being mindful and avoiding pulling, tugging, or swinging your child by the arms or hands.

It is extremely rare for a pulled elbow to result in any long-term damage.

Can I find out more?

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ برائے مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔