

Ulna (Proximal) Fracture

This type of fracture is one in which the ulna, which is one of the bones inside of the forearm, ends up breaking and the radial head at the elbow can become dislocated. When it comes to this type of fracture, it is quite obvious because of the extreme pain and limited movement in the area. Using an x-ray, the fracture can easily be diagnosed by visualizing the joints and bones in the arm. Several different angles of the arm are taken to provide a complete overview of the arm to gain a full understanding of the extent of the injury.

Proximal ulnar fractures are fortunately not particularly common, but if they do occur then they can happen following a bad fall and landing on the bony part of the elbow, severe car accident, or heavy trauma in sports. They are generally referred to as a “fractured elbow”.

Ulna (Proximal) Fracture Anatomy

The ulnar is a forearm bone that is paired with the radius. The radius goes from the elbow to the thumb, and the ulnar bone from the elbow to the smaller fingers. The ulnar forms the main elbow bone, at the back/underneath the elbow.

How to Treat an Ulna (Proximal) Fracture:

1. Immobilization

One of the main forms of treating these fractures is through immobilization of the arm, while the ulna has the time it needs to heal. Keeping the arm in the proper position will allow it to heal properly and prevent additional injuries from occurring.

After the arm has been in the cast for a few weeks, an x-ray can confirm whether the bones are healing evenly or not. If they aren't healing properly or they have been pulled from their position, the cast will have to be removed to correct the situation. For younger patients, casting is often all that is needed, unless the fracture seems problematic.

2. Surgery

For severe fractures, surgery might be required. It can be used to pin the fractured ulna in position and stabilize the joint. If the ulnar is in multiple parts, then wire may need to be used to join the bones. After the surgery is complete, a cast is put in place to provide your arm with stability throughout the healing process. Expect to spend at least six weeks healing.

Tips:

- A severe hyperextension is one of the common causes of these fractures.
- A direct blow to the arm can cause the ulna to become fractured.
- The nature of the fracture and the location of the break determines the healing time and treatment needed.
- Allow your arm the time it needs to heal without doing anything that could pull the bones apart.
- Always follow the guidance of your therapist who will advise you how to rehabilitate the arm.