Clavicle fracture: Non-operative management

Your child has broken (fractured) their collar bone (clavicle). This fracture usually heals well in a simple sling. The sling will help keep your child comfortable while the bone heals.

The first 24-48 hours after injury

Your child will have pain in their shoulder initially. Medication such as ibuprofen (e.g. Advil™) as needed following the directions on the bottle will help decrease their pain.

Although nerve and artery injuries are very rare with this injury, you should return to the emergency department if your child develops numbness or tingling in the hand.

Follow-up appointment

Most children with clavicle fractures do not require follow-up with a doctor or need to get another x-ray. Some children over the age of 12 with displaced fractures may need a review by the doctor in the fracture clinic about 7-10 days after injury.
After 3 weeks

Remove the sling 3 weeks after your child broke their arm. With the sling off, your child can begin moving the shoulder. At first, shoulder may be stiff. The movement will get better with time but this may take up to one year. Physiotherapy is not usually necessary.

To decrease the risk of rebreaking their arm, your child should not participate in high-risk activities such as playing on monkey-bars, ice-skating, skateboarding and sports for 12 weeks after their injury. However, your child can return to low risk sports such as swimming as soon as their shoulder is comfortable.

Your child may feel a bump on the collarbone. This is normal; it means that the fracture has healed. The bump will get smaller over the next year, but it may not disappear completely.

Contact your doctor if your child continues to have pain in the shoulder 6 weeks after the injury.

Contact your doctor if your child has not regained normal shoulder movement 6 months after injury.

Key Points

- Your child needs a sling to help heal their broken arm.
- You will take off the sling at home after 3 weeks after injury.
- Your child will need to avoid high-risk activities for a total of 12 weeks after their injury.
- Your child may have a bump on the collar bone where the fracture has healed.