

DIDACT

DIDACT: A study comparing treatments for a break to the end of the collarbone



Participant information: Sling use and initial self-care



The information provided in this leaflet is to support the advice and guidance given to you by your local orthopaedic and physiotherapy teams.

If you have any questions about this leaflet, please ask staff at the hospital or contact the study team at ytu-didact@york.ac.uk

Scan this QR code for a YouTube video about sling care that has been developed by the DIDACT team or use the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0hX8ng1W14&t=3s>

You have been given this leaflet as you have had a break to the outer part of your collar bone (clavicle).

You will have been given a sling for comfort in the early stages following your injury.

There are different types of slings, the most common include, the 'broad arm' sling, 'collar and cuff', and the 'triangular' bandage.

As everyone is individual, you should **find a position that works best for you** and provides the most comfort. The picture below shows a recommended position.



Applying and removing your sling

Whichever type of sling you have been provided, it is important to come out of your sling regularly to prevent stiffness and to do the early exercises regularly.

How to remove a 'broad arm' sling:



Have your affected arm supported on a table or your knee. Loosen the Velcro fastening of the top strap. Re-attach the Velcro further down to avoid the strap slipping out.



Bend your neck forward a little and lift the neck strap over your head.



Slide your affected arm out of the sling.

How to re-apply your sling



Slide your elbow of the affected side into the corner of the arm support.



Bend your neck forward and place the neck strap over your head.



Loosen the Velcro fastening and adjust upwards towards your neck and re-apply. Your elbow should now sit at a right angle.

As sling types can vary, if you have difficulty applying, and removing your sling, please contact your local physiotherapy team.

How long to wear your sling?

Everyone's recovery and time in a sling is different and very individual. You should use your own levels of comfort to guide when you start to reduce your sling use.

It is however important to remember that **you should be coming out of your sling regularly** during the day.

Typically, **patients who do not have surgery** for their clavicle fracture will have removed their sling by four weeks, with some patients feeling comfortable to do so from weeks two or three.

Patients who have had surgery and been provided a sling for comfort are encouraged to remove their sling as their discomfort reduces. Patients often remove

their sling when they no longer feel it is necessary, with most coming out of their sling by two weeks.

Sleeping

It is normal to have difficulty sleeping initially. You may find it more comfortable to sleep more upright with pillows as shown below. This will support the arm and reduce you rolling onto the affected side.



Washing and dressing

Simple activities such as washing and dressing yourself may be uncomfortable initially. Wearing loose fitting clothing and front fastening tops can make it easier to dress and undress.



You may also find **resting the hand of your affected side on a table** (like in the photo) supports the arm, making dressing as well as cleaning under your armpit easier.

Putting weight through the affected arm should however be **avoided**.

General Advice

- You may find your neck, elbow, wrist, and hand can **stiffen from wearing the sling** for a long time.
- Make sure to **come out of the sling frequently** and **complete your basic early exercises** to improve joint movement and circulation.
- Try to **use your hand on the affected** side for simple tasks such as brushing teeth, using cutlery, and using your phone.
- **Avoid lifting or carrying on the affected side** until you have been encouraged to do so.
- **Regularly taking your prescribed pain relief medication** may make you more comfortable and allow you to reduce your sling use, and exercise more.
- Speak to a medical professional if you have any questions about your recovery or if you are not sure about your medication.