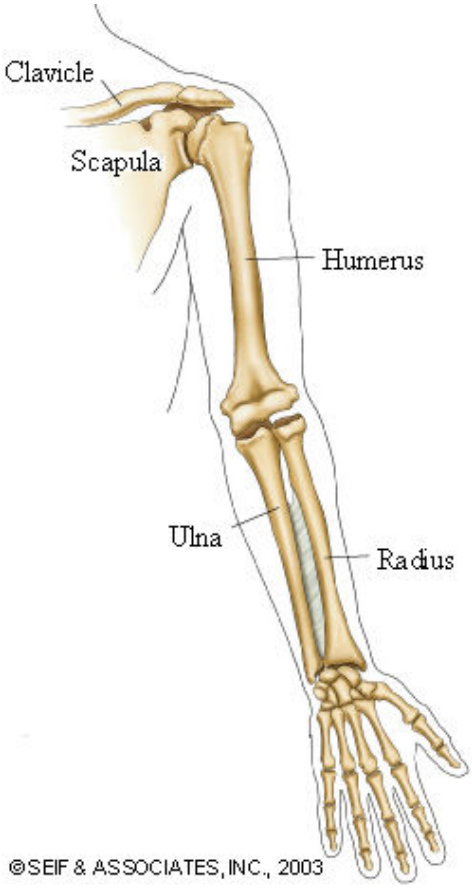
Radial Head Fractures

A radial head fracture is a break of the smaller bone (*radius*) in the forearm. The head of this bone is the part near the elbow. These fractures often happen during a fall when you land on the outstretched arm.



HOME CARE

- Keep the injured part elevated while sitting or lying down. Keep the injury above the center of the chest. This will decrease swelling and pain.
- Apply ice to the injury for 15 to 20 minutes, four times per day while awake, for 2 days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your cast or splint.
- Move your fingers.
- If you have a plaster or fiberglass cast:
  - Do not try to scratch the skin under the cast.
  - Check the skin around the cast every day. You may put lotion on any red or sore areas.
  - Keep your cast dry and clean.
- If you have a plaster splint:
  - Wear the splint as directed.
  - You may loosen the elastic around the splint if your fingers become numb, tingle, or turn cold or blue.
- Do not put pressure on any part of your cast or splint. It may break. Rest your cast on a pillow for the first 24 hours.
- Your cast or splint can be protected during bathing with a plastic bag. Do not put the cast or splint in water.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Follow up with your doctor. This includes any referrals, physical therapy and rehabilitation. Any delay in getting care could result in a delay of the bones healing, failure of the bones to heal or elbow stiffness.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- Your cast or splint gets damaged or breaks.
- You have more severe pain or swelling than you did before getting the cast.
- You have severe pain when stretching your fingers.
- There is a bad smell, new stains and/or pus-like drainage coming from under the cast.
- Your fingers or hand turn pale or blue, become cold, or you lose feeling.

Document Released: 12/06/2010
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