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# Pulled Elbow

## Paediatric A&E Department



# Pulled Elbow

## Introduction

Your child has been diagnosed as having a "Pulled Elbow".

This is a common condition in young children up to the age of 6. It is a traction injury and the small bone at the elbow slips out of a ring shaped ligament. Usually the child is being held by the hand and then either tries to run away or sits down suddenly, leaving the elbow stretched. Sometimes the history is not clear, and sometimes the injury can occur with less force e.g. when having an arm put into the sleeve of a coat.

The diagnosis is a clinical one, based on the history and the position the child is holding their arm in. Usually the arm is held by the side with the forearm facing inwards, or the child may hold onto the wrist to prevent any movement at the elbow.

If the child is older than 6 or the mechanism is unclear, the doctor may X-ray to rule out other conditions.

Once the diagnosis is clear the doctor or nurse can manipulate the elbow to move the bone back into the correct position. The child will usually cry for a minute or two, but then experiences relief as they can then use the arm normally. Occasionally it will take longer for the child to use the arm, especially if the injury occurred more than a few hours before they attend hospital. If the child does not use the arm within 30 minutes it may be necessary to repeat the manipulation, or put the child in a collar and cuff for a few days to allow swelling to reduce.

It is possible that a pulled elbow may happen again until your child reaches the age of 5-6 when the bone in the elbow has grown enough to stop moving out of its ligament. Either elbow can be affected. No permanent damage has been reported in children with recurrent pulled elbows.

If it does happen again, your child is complaining of a painful elbow or you notice they are not using the arm, please return to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

## Further Information

Paediatric Accident and Emergency Department  
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Telephone: **01932 872000**

The following website also gives useful advice:  
[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

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## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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