

Rehabilitation after Immobilisation of the Elbow

The elbow joint is made up of three bones, the upper arm bone (humerus) and two bones in the forearm, the ulnar which forms the elbow and the radius.



Immobilisation of the elbow in a sling can be due to:

- Fracture/ fixation of the ulnar or radius
- Elbow joint replacement

There may be stiffness in the shoulder, wrist and finger joints, so keep them moving if they are not injured.

Normal use of the shoulder, wrist and hands are encouraged.

What is the initial treatment after immobilisation?

Your elbow may be swollen and painful after being in a sling. Swelling and pain can be eased by applying an **ice pack**. Wrap frozen peas / crushed ice in a damp, cold towel and place on the elbow for up to 20 minutes 3 to 4 times a day. **Tubigrip** can help manage the swelling and offer some support.

Your elbow will be stiff so it is important to start to **exercise** your elbow as soon as possible to regain normal movement. Stiffness and pain should ease gradually. Some gentle exercises are attached which must be done regularly within pain.

Physiotherapy can help gain more movement in a very stiff elbow.

Be aware of your **posture** when sitting or standing. Wearing a sling can pull on your neck and make you hunch over. Try to gently bring your shoulder blades down and in towards the spine.

When recovering from a fracture you should **avoid overstressing the joint** with heavy lifting.

For guidance on return to driving, DIY and sports you should speak with your surgeon or physiotherapist

