

Humerus Fracture (Upper Arm Break): What You Need To Know

General Information

You have a break in your humerus bone. The humerus bone is located in the upper arm between your elbow and shoulder.

You may have a broken bone because of:

- a fall
- overuse
- a trauma such as a car accident
- a weakening of the bone caused by a disease or condition such as cancer or osteoporosis.

Your risk for having a broken bone increases with age as your bones become more brittle (soft). Falls are the most common cause of upper arm breaks.

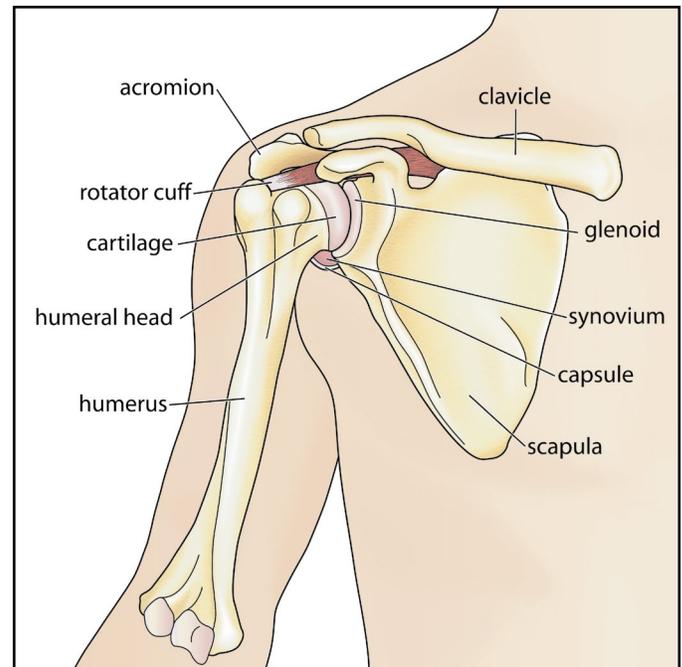
Types of Upper Arm Breaks

A break can be any size, and can occur under the skin or break through the skin.

Your bone may have broken:

- near your shoulder
- in the middle of the bone between your shoulder and elbow
- near the elbow.

Treating an upper arm break will depend on where the bone broke and how severe it is.



© Allina Health System

The humerus bone is in the upper arm between your elbow and shoulder. A break can occur in the upper, middle or lower part of the bone.

Treatment

Most upper arm breaks are in the middle of the bone and will heal without surgery.

Treatment without surgery

You will need to wear a sling or brace until your arm heals. This will protect and support your broken arm, and keep you from movements that could re-injure yourself. Follow any instructions your health care provider gives you.

(over)

Treatment with surgery

Surgery is usually needed for breaks closer to a joint (near your shoulder socket or elbow). During surgery, your surgeon will put the bone back into place and then secure it with screws, plates, rods or pins. You will need to wear a sling or brace until you heal from your surgery.

Underarm Care

To care for your underarm:

- wash the underarm of your injured arm once in the morning and once at night
- gently pass a soapy washcloth from the front to the back
- rinse and dry by passing a wet washcloth, and then dry washcloth from front to back
- put a pad under your arm to help with sweating and to keep your skin from getting irritated.

Pain Relief

Your health care provider may prescribe a medicine or suggest an over-the-counter product to help reduce pain and swelling as you heal. Icing your arm may also help to relieve pain and swelling.

Restore Function and Strength

It is important to restore the function and strength of your arm. This will allow you to resume daily activities with your arm moving freely and without pain. Your health care provider may prescribe exercises for you or you may be referred to a physical therapist. Follow any instructions your health care provider gives you for activities.

Food and Beverages

As you recover, make sure to:

- eat well-balanced meals
- do not drink alcohol if you are taking prescription pain medicine
- follow any instructions your health care provider gives you.

Recovery Time

Recovery time varies for each person. Talk with your health care provider about when you can resume your normal activities.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if:

- you have a temperature of 101 F or higher
- you have signs of infection: increasing redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth, change in appearance or increased drainage
- your arm:
 - is cool to the touch
 - is blue or gray in color
 - feels cold or numb
- you have severe pain that is not relieved by medicine or rest
- you have any questions or concerns.

Follow-up Appointment

Keep all follow-up appointments with your health care provider, even if you are feeling well.