

# Discharge Information: Greenstick fractures

This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your care after discharge.

You or your family member has been diagnosed with a greenstick fracture of the forearm.

Greenstick fractures result in one side of the bone being broken and the other side being bent. They occur most commonly in children as their still growing bones are more flexible than in adults.

The term "greenstick" comes from the analogy of breaking a young, fresh tree branch. The broken branch snaps on one side (the outer side of the bend), while the inner side is intact but bent.

## Initial Treatment

Greenstick fractures require immobilisation in a cast and if the deformity is severe may require correction under an anaesthetic.

Due to the presence or potential for swelling a half cast or "backslab" will be applied and follow up will be arranged either in the Emergency Department, the Orthopaedic Outpatients Clinic or with a private Orthopaedic surgeon.

Once supported in a cast, simple pain killers such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen usually provide adequate pain relief for these injuries.

Rest the injured arm in a high arm sling for the first 24-48 hours.

## Follow up Treatment

It is not uncommon for greenstick fractures to move even though they are supported in a cast.

If you are not referred to an Orthopaedic specialist you must return to the Emergency Department in 7 days to have another x-ray to check that the fracture hasn't moved.

If the second x-ray shows no change in the fracture position a complete cast will be applied.

The total cast time will be 4 weeks from injury for children younger than 10 and 5 weeks for children 10 and over.

Once the cast is removed sporting activities will need to be restricted for a further 6 weeks.

If there is any concern that the fracture has moved you will be referred to an Orthopaedic specialist.

## Plaster and Synthetic Cast Care

### Initial Cast Care

If a cast or plaster splint has been applied you must do the following for the first 24 hours:

- Rest the arm in a sling
- Keep it elevated (eg. Sleep with your arm on a pillow)
- Check your hand for any of the following:
  - Increasing pain
  - Increasing swelling
  - Numbness or tingling
  - Change in skin colour
  - Change in skin temperature

If you experience any of the above signs or symptoms please phone or return to the Emergency Department for review.

- Keep moving the toes
- If you have a full cast, come back the following day to have your cast checked.

### Ongoing Cast Care

#### Do:

- Keep the cast dry
- Check daily for cracks, breaks or soft areas
- Exercise joints not affected
- Be aware of a loose cast when the swelling subsides; replacement may be necessary
- If in doubt seek advice

#### Don't

- Get the cast wet
- Get the cast near anything hot. The cast material retains heat and may cause a burn
- Poke objects inside your cast
- Alter or cut your cast in any way
- Carry heavy objects or lean on your cast.

## Contact Numbers

Noarlunga Hospital  
Emergency Department  
08 8384 9288

Flinders Medical Centre  
Emergency Department  
08 8204 6065

Orthopaedic Clinic  
08 8204 4787

## Private Orthopaedic Surgeon

Name: .....

Your next review is: .....

Address: .....

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Contact number: .....

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Appointment Date: .....

If a referral has been sent to the Orthopaedic Clinic and you do not receive an appointment time within 5 days you will need to call them on the number listed above.

Appointment Time: .....

## For more information

Emergency Department  
Flinders Medical Centre  
Flinders Drive  
Bedford Park SA 5042

Emergency Department  
Noarlunga Hospital  
Alexander Kelly Drive  
Noarlunga Centre SA 5168

Telephone: 08 8204 5042  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.



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