

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Elbow Fractures In Children Are Different

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Children have a complicated system of growth centers around the elbow. When a child's elbow breaks it usually breaks into or through the growth center. The little growth center cells can be damaged in the process and begin to grow abnormally. This can cause the elbow to be deformed.

Although elbow fractures amount to only 10% of all the fractures in children, they are among the most serious if not treated properly and promptly.

How They Break

Kids can break their elbows doing anything really. Want to hear a few?

- Trampoline (fun until you break your elbow!)
- Monkey bars
- Balancing on the back of a couch
- Falling in any sports activity
- See what I mean. Limitless!

Signs and Symptoms

- A broken elbow is very painful
- Swelling is common but not always present
- Child will not move the elbow
- Elbow may look deformed
- May not look deformed

Key Point

Something happens, usually a fall. Child won't move the elbow. Even if the pain seems mild, it needs to be evaluated. Now.

Children's Fractures Can Hide

Growth centers on x-ray look like open spaces so a fracture can be present in the growth center and not be visible on initial x-rays. That's why children's fractures are frequently not diagnosed by emergency room personnel.

Treatment

Correct Orthopaedic diagnosis is needed for proper treatment. Careful examination, good x-ray views often with a comparison view of the other side and a thorough knowledge of children's fractures are necessary ingredients.

The possible menu:

- Splinting
- Long arm cast
- Setting the fracture with anesthesia
- Open treatment of the fracture usually with metal pins (later removed)

Danger

Fractures in and around the growth areas (growth plates) of the elbow can affect the pattern of growth. Growth can be arrested by the injury and deformity can result. This can happen even in apparently mild fractures.

Hopefully you will never need this information, but if an elbow injury happens to a child in your care, you will have benefited from what I said.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive

Don't forget to check out the entirely new office website www.orthopodsurgeon.com, Your Orthopaedic Connection and the Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive of all back articles. It is a wealth of information about all the things I treat in the office and hospital.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush