

WIRE FIXATION FOR ARM FRACTURES

How will my child's fracture be treated?

Your child has sustained a fracture that requires wires to be put into the bone to hold it in place while healing takes place. The wires are left protruding through the skin to allow easy removal once sufficient healing has taken place.

Follow up at the Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic

Follow up is normally 7-10 days following the injury/operation. At this visit an x-ray is done. If the position of the fracture/s is satisfactory the cast is usually overwrapped with soft cast to make the cast stronger until the final appointment. The cast may be changed on the first visit if it has become loose or is soft/broken.

Wire removal

Wires that are left protruding from the skin are usually removed in the Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic after sufficient bone healing has taken place. This takes place approximately 4 weeks following surgery and is tolerated well by most children. The procedure will be explained to you and your child.

The discomfort of wire removal varies. Some children experience no pain at all, while some have pain/discomfort which mostly subsides within a few minutes. Although children may be anxious or cry, it is a fast and relatively painless procedure, so they need not be scared.

The nurses will do their best to minimise any distress/concerns by assisting parents/caregivers to use comfort positioning for the procedure, using distraction, giving clear explanations and reassurance.

Giving your child pain relief (such as Paracetamol) prior to coming into the clinic for wire removal is advisable.

If your child has a large number of wires to be removed, or is particularly distressed about having the wires removed, alternative options can be discussed with you at your first appointment.

Once the wires are removed a band aid is placed over the wire sites. We ask that these stay on until the wire sites have healed over. This normally takes 3-5 days. In most cases no further casting is required. Occasionally there can be an over growth of tissue (over granulation) at the entry point of the wire. If this occurs, a specialised dressing is required.

Complications

Infections at the wire site can happen to a small number of children and can start any time following insertion of the wires. Signs of infection include increasing pain, increased temperature and/or foul smell from cast. If you think your child may have a wire infection please call the Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic nurses.

Occasionally wires can migrate (move) below the skin surface. In this instance, an anaesthetic may be required to remove the wires. This will be done as a day surgery, not in the outpatient clinic.

Once the cast and wires are removed some stiffness in the elbow/wrist may be present. The stiffness usually goes away within a few months. Physiotherapy is not necessary. The doctor will advise you how long your child needs to stay away from any activity where they may fall, resulting in re-fracture. After this time your child will gradually be able to resume normal activities.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact the Paediatric Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic Nurses on (09) 307 4949 Ext 22537. Clinic Hours are Monday to Friday 8.30am – 5.00pm.

For after-hours queries, please call the Starship Children's Emergency Department on (09) 307 4949 ext 24200 and discuss your concerns with one of the nurses.

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