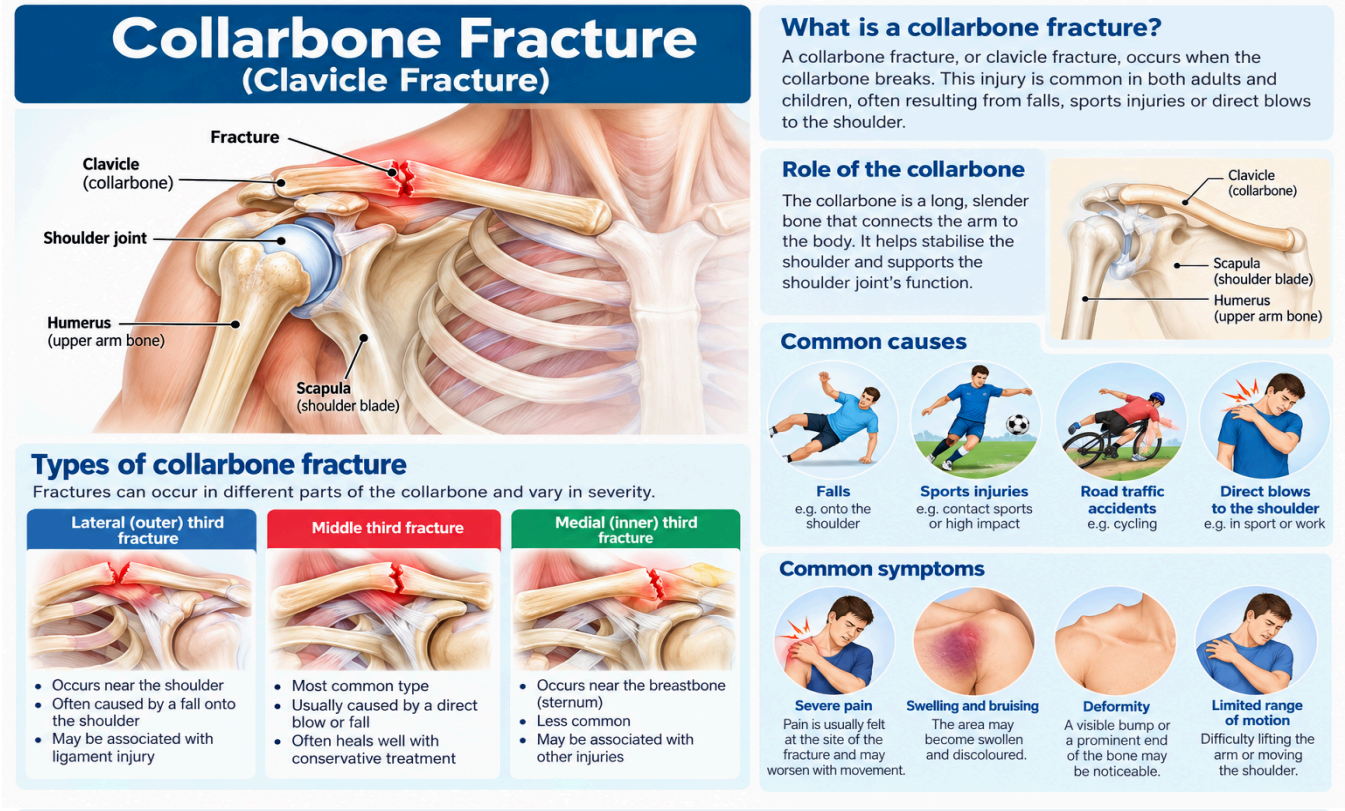
Collarbone Fracture

Understanding a broken collarbone, symptoms and care

Collarbone Fracture

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



What is a collarbone fracture?

A collarbone (clavicle) fracture is a break in the bone connecting the shoulder to the chest. It can happen after a fall, sporting injury or direct impact.

Anatomy of the collarbone

The clavicle helps connect the arm to the body, supports the shoulder and contributes to shoulder stability.

Seek medical assessment

If you suspect a collarbone fracture, seek prompt medical assessment. Avoid forcing the shoulder to move.

Symptoms, diagnosis and treatment

Medical assessment and appropriate fracture care

1. Common symptoms

Pain at the collarbone, swelling or bruising, a visible bump or change in shape, and difficulty moving or lifting the arm.

2. Physical examination

A clinician examines the shoulder and collarbone for tenderness, swelling, deformity and movement difficulties.

3. Imaging tests

X-rays usually show the fracture location and alignment. CT or MRI may be considered for complex injuries or associated tissue damage.

4. Conservative treatment

Many uncomplicated fractures are treated with an arm sling, rest, ice wrapped in a towel and suitable pain relief as advised by a clinician.

5. Surgical treatment

Some severe or displaced fractures may require surgery to align and stabilise the bone, often with plates, screws or other fixation.

Important

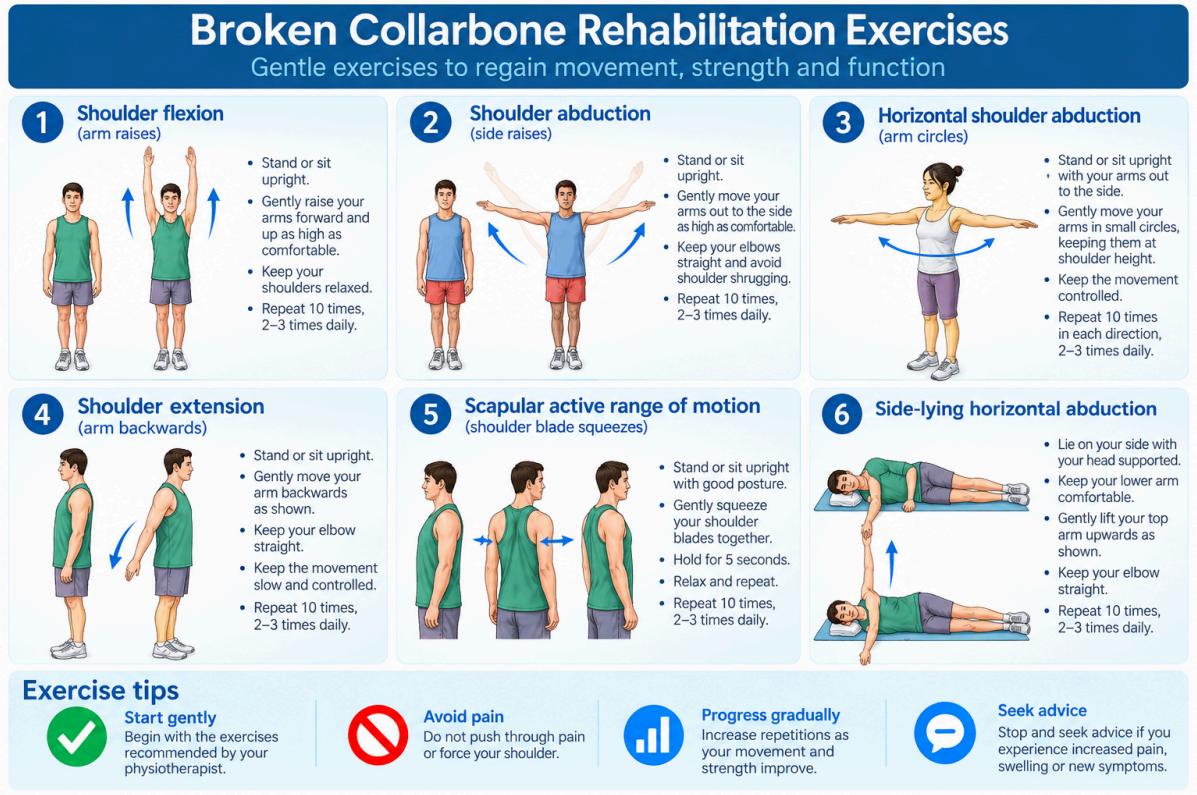
Follow your treating team’s instructions about sling use, follow-up appointments and when to begin shoulder movement.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gradual movement and strengthening under clinical guidance

Shoulder exercise examples

The source leaflet illustrates shoulder flexion, abduction, horizontal abduction, extension, scapular movement and side-lying horizontal abduction. Your clinician will advise when each is appropriate.



Rehabilitation

Physiotherapy may help restore shoulder movement and strength. Return to daily activities and sport gradually as healing allows.

Exercise safely

Do not begin shoulder exercises until your clinician confirms it is safe. Stop if an exercise causes worsening pain, and follow any movement restrictions.

Prevention and next steps

Supporting recovery and reducing the risk of future injury

Strength training

Build shoulder and upper-body strength through exercises recommended by your physiotherapist, once the fracture has healed sufficiently.

Proper technique

Use appropriate techniques during sport, lifting and other physical activities to reduce unnecessary shoulder strain.

Protective equipment

Wear suitable protective equipment for contact sports and activities where falls or collisions may occur.

Follow your recovery plan

Attend recommended follow-up appointments and follow advice about sling use, movement, work, driving and return to sport.

When to seek medical attention

If you suspect a fracture following an injury, seek prompt medical assessment. Seek urgent help for numbness, circulation changes or skin threatened by bone.

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