About this type of fracture

Your baby has a fracture of the clavicle or broken collarbone. Most clavicle fractures in newborns happen with a difficult delivery. This fracture may injure the soft tissue around the baby’s neck, shoulder and upper arm.

With a clavicle fracture:

• Your baby may have pain, swelling or bruising in the fracture area. Pain medicines and other comfort measures may be needed.
• The arm on the side where the fracture is will need to be supported for the first 7 to 10 days to allow the bone to heal. This is called immobilization.
• You will be taught how to support your baby’s arm and how to care for your baby to protect the arm.
• Follow the care instructions from your baby’s doctor. You can use the guidelines below to help you with your baby’s care.

Caring for your baby

• Allow your baby to guide his or her activity as the pain lessens. Your baby will move the hand, elbow and shoulder on the injured side in ways that do not cause pain.
• Be gentle when caring for your baby. The injured arm may be painful.
  † Support under or behind the injured arm when holding the baby.
  † When swaddling baby, bring both arms to the center so baby is able to clasp hands together or bring their hands to their face for comfort.
• Let your baby lie on either side during playtimes.
  † Use a small roll behind the baby’s back for support.
  † Do not put baby on the floor on his or her tummy for play during the time the injured arm is immobilized. Instead, hold your baby on your chest. Let baby use the strong arm against you to lift and turn his or her head from side to side.
• Always put your baby on his or her back to sleep.
• Use clothes with snaps or zippers to make it easier to dress your baby.
  † Dress the injured arm first.
- When undressing, remove the clothes from the uninjured side first so you can slide the clothes off the injured arm.
- Avoid clothes that pull over baby’s head so that you do not have to lift the injured arm in a position that may cause pain for baby during dressing.
- Wash under the injured arm and in the skin folds of the neck and gently pat dry. Be sure the skin is dried before dressing baby.
- After 10 to 14 days, you may feel a bump in the area where the fracture occurred. This is called a fracture callus and it is a sign of healing.

**Immobilizing injured arm**

*Your baby’s doctor has ordered your baby’s injured arm to be immobilized for ________ days to allow it to heal.* The therapists and nurses will teach you how to immobilize the arm. You can also review these instructions.

You will need a 2-inch elastic bandage. You may want to have a spare one in case one gets dirty or wet.

- Be sure baby’s arm is dressed before putting on the wrap. Clothes help protect the baby’s skin.
- Position the injured arm with the hand resting over the baby’s chest.
- Use the elastic bandage and wrap around the injured arm and body to hold the injured arm against the chest. The wrap should be snug but not too tight. Keep the fingers and hand free so baby can move them. Fasten the end with the Velcro or use tape to hold it in place.
- Keep the uninjured arm out of the wrap so baby can move it.

If the elastic bandage gets dirty or wet, wash it out in cool water. Squeeze out as much water as you can and then hang it to dry.

**When to contact your baby’s doctor**

Most clavicle fractures heal after several weeks without any problems. In rare cases, there may be damage to the nerves from this fracture. Talk with your baby’s doctor if you see any of these signs in your baby:

- Pain that does not get better or gets worse over time.
- A temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius.
- Problems with breathing.
- Trouble moving the arm after several weeks on the side where the fracture happened. Your baby may not want to move the arm if it hurts, but long term pain or swelling may be a sign of damage to the nerves from this fracture.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to patienteducation.osumc.edu or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.

© 2000 - March 19, 2019, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.