

Fractures

Judy Simcoe, PTA
Physical Therapist Assistant
Ham Lake Physical Therapy

A fracture is a break in a bone or cartilage caused by direct stress, such as a blow from a heavy object or a severe strain such as a violent twist. They can also be the result of a fall. For example, a fall onto the hand may result in a fracture of the collarbone. There are also pathologic fractures, in which disease softens the bone, making it more vulnerable to a break.

There are many different types of fractures:

Closed Fracture: The bone is broken with no piercing of the skin.

Comminuted Fracture: The bone is broken into several pieces.

Complicated Fracture: The bone is broken and causes significant injury to internal organs, blood vessels or nerves.

Green Stick Fracture: One side of the bone is broken and the bone is not severed.

Impacted Fracture: The ends of two bones or two fragments of bone are jammed together.

Open Fracture: One or more of the broken ends of the bone pierce the skin.

Stress Fracture: Tiny crack (or cracks) in a bone.

Fractures are common among children and the elderly. Because children have soft, elastic bones, breaks in their bones are often incomplete affecting only one side of the bone. Elderly people have brittle bones that tend to break easily (hip fractures are particularly common).

Among the symptoms of a fracture are pain, swelling, loss of strength, abnormal movement and a grating sound when the pieces of broken bone rub together.

Bone fractures are treated by closed (non surgical) or open (surgical) reduction followed by a period of immobilization.