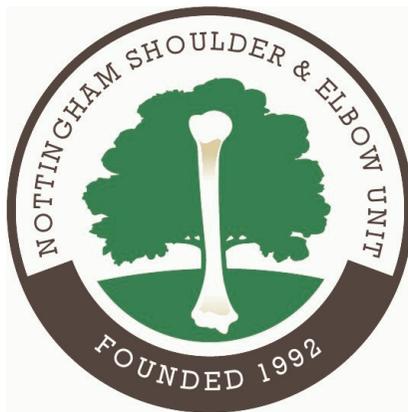


# Total Elbow Replacement Operation

Information for patients

**The Nottingham Shoulder and Elbow Unit**



This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

Physiotherapy Department  
Nottingham City Hospital Campus  
Hucknall Road, Nottingham. NG5 1PB  
Tel: 0115 969 1169 ext 54580

This booklet contains information about the shoulder surgery that you have been advised to have and aims to answer some of the questions you may have about the operation and your stay in hospital.

## **About shoulder surgery at City Hospital**

There are three orthopaedic wards at City Hospital: Theatre Admission Lounge, Harvey 1, and Edward 2. You will be admitted to one of these wards during your stay in hospital. On each ward a 'named nurse' will be allocated to you to co-ordinate your nursing care. You will also have a named physiotherapist to supervise your rehabilitation. The physio may see you before, rather than after your surgery, to organise outpatient physiotherapy and answer any questions you may have. For further information about the ward, please refer to the ward information leaflet.

You will usually be admitted to the hospital on the day of your operation, and you will usually go home 1-2 days later. If you think you will need transport to get home or help when you get home please tell your named nurse when you first come in.

## **What to bring**

You need to bring in with you any medicines that you are taking, toiletries, towel, nightwear and some loose and comfortable clothing. Please leave valuables at home.

## **Operation day**

Your anaesthetist will see you either on the morning of the operation or during your pre-op visit to discuss your anaesthetic with you.

You will be able to eat and drink as usual the day before your operation. You may be able to have an early morning drink even on the day of your operation. The time you have to stop eating will depend upon the time of your operation.

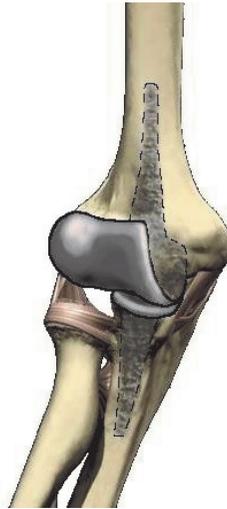
## Total Elbow Replacement – what is it?

A Total elbow replacement is an operation in which specially designed components are used to replace parts of your elbow joint damaged by arthritis or injury.

The various parts of an artificial elbow joint are made from a combination of metal and plastic and are designed to mimic the normal movement of your elbow as much as possible.



Right elbow joint



Right elbow total replacement

Your surgeon will remove the damaged parts of your elbow joint and replace them with new parts as shown. The new parts of your elbow are fixed into place by metal rods inserted into your arm bones (the humerus at the top and the ulna at the bottom).

A Total Elbow Replacement is usually done when arthritis has damaged both parts of your joint.

## **Total Elbow Replacement – what will it do?**

A Total Elbow Replacement is an operation to relieve your pain, and should take away most, if not all, of the pain that you have in your elbow. It may take several weeks before you feel the full benefit of your new elbow, so please do not be disappointed if it is still painful after the operation.

It is unlikely that you will have as much movement as a normal elbow after having a Total Elbow Replacement, but the therapists will help you to try and get as much movement as possible from your new joint. Some people do find that they actually get more movement from their new joint, but this depends upon how stiff your elbow was before the operation.

## **How is it done?**

An elbow replacement is done as an 'open' operation, which will leave a scar about 20cms in length along the back of your elbow. During your operation your surgeon will examine your elbow joint.

## **How will I look after my operation?**

Your elbow wound will have a dressing on it, and you will have a small drainage tube coming out of your elbow.

## **When will the clips/ stitches come out?**

Your clips/ stitches will be removed on the ward or at your GP's surgery, usually 10 days after your operation

## **Will I have to wear a splint or sling?**

You will have your arm supported in a plaster cast straight after your operation. This is to keep your elbow still while the drain is in place. It also protects your elbow until we have done x-rays to check how your operation has gone. You may be given a light sling to help you with the weight of the cast.

You should exercise your hand frequently to stop it getting stiff. Squeezing a tight fist and then stretching out your fingers and thumb is a good way to do this.

It also helps to exercise your shoulder by lifting your arm up above your head (if your shoulder will let you). You can use your other arm to help, as the plaster cast is a little heavy – but please be careful not to pull your drain out!

When you are resting, you should try to have your operated arm supported on pillows. The nurses and therapists will help you with this.

## **What will happen on the ward?**

You will have x-rays taken the day after your surgery. Your surgeons will check these to make sure that it is safe to take off your cast.

When your cast is removed, the occupational therapists will make you a plastic splint to help keep your elbow straight. This is much lighter than the plaster cast, and will be more comfortable. However, because your arm is likely to be swollen after your operation, the splint often needs adjusting over the first week or so as your swelling goes down. You will also be shown how to do the exercises in this booklet by one of the physiotherapy team members.

## How can I sleep?

Sleeping can be a little uncomfortable if you try to lie on your operated elbow. We would recommend that you lie on your back or the opposite side, as you prefer. Ordinary pillows can be used to give you comfort and support (feather pillows are easier to use than foam ones).

**You must wear your splint when sleeping until told that you do not need to** (this is normally for six weeks). You may wear your sling if you have one if you find it helpful.



One pillow slightly folded under your neck gives enough support for most people.

Fold a pillow to support your operated arm and splint as shown.

A pillow tucked along your back prevents you rolling onto your elbow in the night.



If sleeping on your back, tie a pillow tightly in the middle (a 'butterfly pillow'), or use a folded pillow.

Fold a pillow to go under your operated arm and splint.

## Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is important if you are to get the most out of your elbow after the operation. The first stage is to get your elbow moving again, with the following exercises.

**Please do not start them until your therapist or surgeon tells you that you can.**

### How much exercise should I do?

You will need to remove your splint to do your exercises.

You should do your exercises in the order they are shown in this booklet.

Try to do **five repetitions** of each exercise **at least twice** a day.

Your exercises can then be altered or increased under the guidance of your physiotherapist.

You can use your arm for light activities such as washing, eating and dressing (but be careful of pushing or pulling too hard with it).

## Exercises

You should not start these exercises until you have been instructed to do so by your physiotherapist. Your physiotherapist will advise you when you are safe to progress to each one.

[A video of this exercise is available here](#)



Sit with your elbow supported on your leg, let it straighten out. **Do not let it go completely straight until you are told it is all right to try this by your therapist or surgeon.** Until then, make sure that it is always bent at least **30 degrees** (like when it is in your splint).

You can also do this when lying. (Position yourself as you would if sleeping on your back.) But still remember to restrict the range of movement as described above



Then try to bend your elbow up to 90 degrees. **Again, you must not go further than this until your therapist or surgeon tells you that it is ok.** This is to protect the wound on the back of your elbow.

You can also do this when lying. (Position yourself as you would if sleeping on your back.) But still remember to restrict the range of movement.

You can also try turning your hand palm up and palm down with your elbow supported as above.

You can now start the exercises below (sign & date).....



Now you can try to let your elbow straighten out as much as it can.



You can also try to bend it as much as you can (beyond 90 degrees). You may use your other arm to help you a little.



Lie on your back with your elbow on a pillow as shown, slowly bend and straighten your elbow as far as you can.

You may need to support it a little with your other hand at first, until your strength improves.

You can now start the exercise below (sign & date).....



Lie on your back as before, now raise your arm up and carefully try to hold your arm as straight as you can. You may need to support it with your other hand at first, until your strength improves.

# Nottingham Shoulder and Elbow Unit Therapy website

<https://www.nuh.nhs.uk/shoulder-and-elbow-physiotherapy-unit>

## Useful contact numbers

**City Hospital Campus (0115) 969 1169**

Dial the City Hospital campus number above, listen to the recorded message and then dial the appropriate extension from the list below.

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Extension</b>
<b>Clinic reception</b> (To alter a clinic appointment)	<b>Mon– Fri</b> <b>9am-5pm</b>	55306
<b>Shoulder and Elbow secretaries:</b> Genevieve Stewart-Smith Amy Martin	<b>Mon – Fri</b> <b>9am – 5pm</b>	55047 56899
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>		55330
<b>Physiotherapy Shoulder and Elbow Team</b>	<b>Mon – Fri</b>	54580
<b>Therapy Reception</b> (To alter a therapy appointment)	<b>8am – 4pm</b>	55310 55330 56119
<b>Wards</b>		
Edward 2 Ward	<b>24 hours</b> <b>if urgent</b>	55879
Harvey 1 Ward		55904/6
Theatre Admission Lounge		51441

## Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

**Freephone:** 0800 183 0204

**From a mobile or abroad:** 0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301

**E-mail:** [pals@nuh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@nuh.nhs.uk)

**Letter:** NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR

[www.nuh.nhs.uk](http://www.nuh.nhs.uk)

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email [patientinformation@nuh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformation@nuh.nhs.uk) or phone 0115 924 9924 ext. 67184.

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