Further information

For advice, if you are concerned, ring NHS Direct 0845 4647 www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4957.

Pulled Elbow (Child)

Patient Information

Emergency Department
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham
Mindelsohn Way
Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2WB
Telephone: 0121 371 2600

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www.uhb.nhs.uk
Pulled elbow (child)

Your child has been diagnosed as having a pulled elbow.

This is common in young children.

It is not a dislocation but a movement of one of the bones in the elbow out of its ligament - the fibrous ring in the diagram below. This usually happens when the child’s arm is accidentally pulled. Sometimes no injury can be remembered.

An x-ray of the elbow may be needed to rule out a fracture, but this will not diagnose a pulled elbow.

The doctor can usually make the bone slip back into its ligament. This involves moving the elbow gently which can be painful for a few seconds.

Normally your child will be able to use the arm very quickly after the treatment, but this may take 30 minutes or longer if the pulled elbow has been present for a while.

It is not always possible to solve the problem by performing the manoeuvre the first time. In these cases, the arm is usually rested in a sling and the child is seen again in the next 1-2 days. Often, the problem resolves itself in this period of time. If not, another attempt to move the elbow may be necessary.

A pulled elbow may happen again until your child reaches the age of 7-8 years, when the bone in the elbow has grown enough to stop moving out of its ligament. It can affect either elbow. A pulled elbow will not cause any long term problems.

You can help by trying to avoid pulling your child’s arms.

If it does happen again or if your child is complaining of a painful elbow or not using the arm, please return to your nearest Emergency Department.

Further information