

# Intramedullary distraction for upper limb lengthening

Information for the public

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There is not enough evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is. This procedure can cause complications. So it can only be done with special arrangements. This means you will have regular appointments afterwards to check how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

People can be born with different length arms, or this can be caused by disease, injury, nerve damage at birth, or surgery to remove bone tumours. In this procedure, through an incision, the upper arm bone is cut and a metal lengthening device (distractor) is put inside the bone (intramedullary) across the cut. After the operation, the device is gradually lengthened while new bone forms across the cut, increasing the length of the bone. The device is lengthened using an electric or magnetic internal motor, operated through a connecting cable or remotely. This process of lengthening and healing takes several months. The device may be removed through surgery or left in place.

You can [search the NHS website for information about consultants and hospitals](#) that offer this procedure.

## Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

## Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

## More information

- [NICE's information on interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on interventional procedures recommendations](#) explains what special arrangements are.

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