

Complex fractures

Information for the public

Published: 17 February 2016

Last updated: 23 November 2022

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Complex fractures: the care you should expect

Complex fractures are complicated breaks in bones, which usually need care by a specialist team. They include open fractures (where the bone has broken through the skin), fractures to the pelvis (which are often linked to other internal injuries) and severe ankle fractures. Some complex fractures can be dealt with in the nearest emergency department, but others will need more specialist care in major trauma units or centres. We want this guideline to make a difference to people with complex fractures by making sure:

- you receive appropriate pain relief and care before being taken to hospital
- if you need more specialist care, you are taken to a major trauma unit or centre with expertise in your type of fracture
- a clear summary of your management plan is sent to your GP
- your trauma team explains what is happening to you and your family or carer, and you know who to contact for further information and support.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment and care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment and care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment and care affect your day-to-day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment and care?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [St John Ambulance](#)
- [British Red Cross](#), 0808 196 3651
- [Limbless Association](#), 0800 644 0185
- [Royal Osteoporosis Society](#), 0808 800 0035
- [Pain Concern](#), 0300 123 0789.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by complex fractures and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-1677-1