

# PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE

## Olecranon Fractures



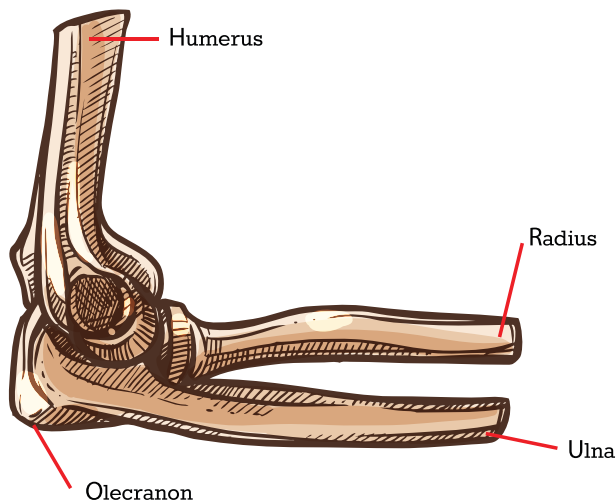
**“Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients.”**

MARYBETH EZAKI, MD, PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SURGERY OF THE HAND

### What is an olecranon fracture?

The elbow is made up of three bones, the humerus (upper arm), the ulna (small finger side of forearm) and the radius (thumb side of forearm). The olecranon is part of the ulna bone on the back of the elbow. It can easily be seen as the bony tip of the elbow when the elbow is bent. When the tip of the elbow breaks, it is known as an olecranon fracture. The olecranon is just under the skin, without cushion from muscles or other soft tissue. This makes the olecranon easy to break.

*Bones of the elbow*



### What causes an olecranon fracture?

Olecranon fractures can happen from a fall onto the back of the elbow or when the back of the elbow is hit by a hard object, such as a baseball bat or dashboard of a car during an accident. An olecranon fracture may also be caused by a fall on an outstretched arm.

### What are the symptoms of an olecranon fracture?

An olecranon fracture can cause intense pain especially when trying to move the elbow. Other symptoms can include pain, swelling and bruising of the elbow, numbness in the ring and small fingers and feeling like the elbow might pop out of place.

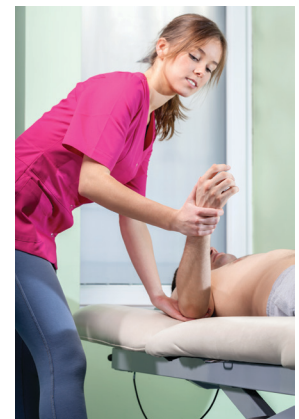
### What is the treatment for an olecranon fracture?

The type of treatment needed for an olecranon fracture will depend on the severity of the fracture and how much of the fractured bone has moved out of place. An elbow X-ray will be taken to show how much of the olecranon is fractured. If the olecranon bone fracture is not out of place, the elbow will require immobilization with a cast or an orthosis. If the olecranon bone fracture is out of place or has pushed through the skin, surgery may be needed.



### What can a hand therapist do for me?

A hand therapist will provide therapy based on the type of olecranon fracture and whether the patient has had surgery. The doctor and therapist will communicate and work together. The hand therapist may make an elbow orthosis to support and protect the elbow. The hand therapist will provide a home program to improve pain, swelling, movement and strength of the injured elbow.



To locate a hand therapist in your area, visit the American Society of Hand Therapists at [www.asht.org](http://www.asht.org) or call 856-380-6856.