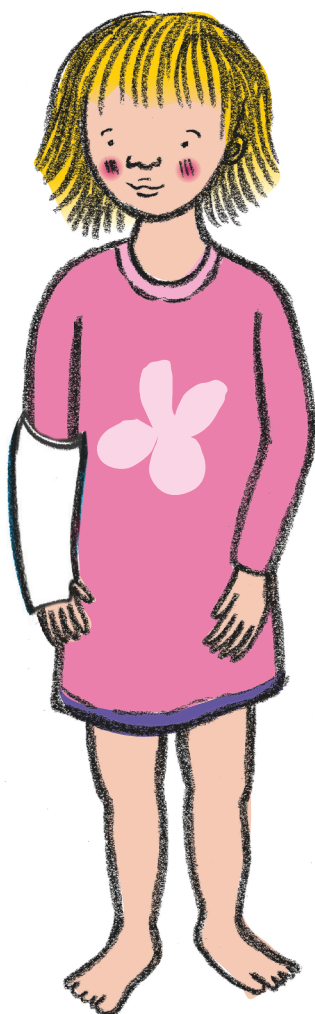
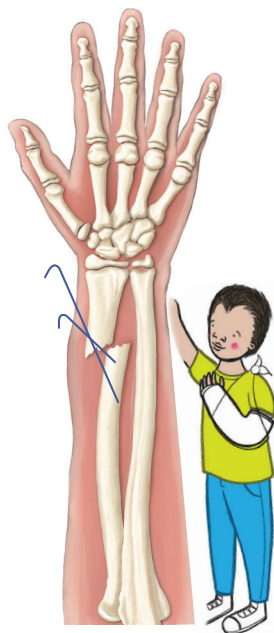


# K-Wire Removal for Arm Fractures



## What are K-wires?

K-wires (*wires*) are put in during surgery to help hold a broken (*fractured*) bone in place while it is healing. The wires are placed so that the ends stick out of the skin, making them easy to remove once the bone has healed. They are covered with a dressing, padding and a plaster cast (*backslab*). Your child will not be able to feel or see the wires under the cast.



## Fracture Clinic

Usually your child will be seen in the Fracture Clinic at Starship Outpatients 7-10 days after surgery. During this visit your child will have an x-ray. If the x-ray shows that the fracture is healing in the right position, soft cast may be wrapped over the top of your child's existing cast, to make it stronger until your child can be seen at the Wire Removal Clinic.

## Wire Removal Clinic

Three to four weeks after surgery your child will come to the Wire Removal Clinic at Starship Outpatients to have the wires removed.

We recommend giving your child pain relief (such as paracetamol) before coming to the clinic.

It is important that you talk with your child so they understand what will happen during the procedure. This reduces any anxiety they may have and helps them to cope better. Younger children may need only a very simple explanation, whereas an older child or young person may need a more detailed explanation. You may want to talk to them about what they can do if they are feeling anxious or worried.

## What happens during K-Wire Removal

You will receive a letter which tells you where and when you will come to Wire Removal Clinic

1. Go directly to Starship Radiology (level 1, Starship) for an x-ray.\*
2. After the x-ray then go to Starship Outpatients Reception (on level 3) to check in and wait to see the doctor. Your child can then spend time with the play specialist if required.\*
3. First your child's cast will be removed in a clinic room. Soft casts can be removed simply by unwrapping or using scissors; hard casts can be removed with a bi-valve machine. This machine is designed to split the hard outer cast; it vibrates and is quite noisy but doesn't touch your child's skin.\*
4. The dressing over the wires will be removed and the skin cleaned.
5. The wires will then be removed. The procedure is quick and may feel strange, but is not usually too uncomfortable. The nurses and doctor will do their best to minimise any distress or discomfort for your child by using distraction, giving clear explanations and reassurance. They will encourage your involvement in comforting and reassuring your child.
6. The small wounds remaining after the wires have been removed may bleed a little, so the nurse will apply pressure for 1-2 minutes. This can be uncomfortable and is often the least favourite part of the procedure for your child.
7. Dressings are put on over these small wounds.
8. Your child's arm may be placed in a sling just to help them feel more comfortable after the procedure. The sling only needs to be worn the day of the wire removal procedure.

If you would like support explaining the wire removal procedure to your child, or if you are concerned that they may be particularly anxious or worried, please contact the Starship Outpatient Hospital Play Specialists. They can work with you to address your child's concerns, providing guidance and age appropriate explanations. Some children may find their hospital experiences overwhelming. Hospital Play Specialists can work with children, their whanau and health care team to develop effective coping strategies to manage anxiety around hospital procedures.

**\*FIND US HERE: [www.starship.org.nz/orthoinfo](http://www.starship.org.nz/orthoinfo) For online videos about having an Xray, removing a cast (bivalve) and a map for directions.**

# Aftercare

## Dressings:

- Your child will have a dressing put on when the wires are removed. This needs to stay on and be kept completely dry for the first 24 hours.
- After 24 hours your child may get the wounds wet with fresh running water (like a shower) but you will need to remove the wet dressing and put on a new clean dry dressing.
- Once the wound sites have healed over (usually 5-7 days) your child may then soak in the bath or swim in the pool or ocean as usual.

## General care:

- Usually, once the wires have been removed, a child does not need to have another cast put on. However sometimes a cast may be needed for a further 2-3 weeks, depending on what the x-ray shows.
- Your child may have some stiffness of the elbow or wrist which usually goes away on its own within a few months. Physiotherapy is not necessary.

- The doctor will let you know how long your child needs to avoid doing any activity where they may fall, to minimise the chance of re-fracture.
- Your child does not usually require any further follow up after the wire removal.

## Possible Complications

### Infection

Infection of the wire site is uncommon, but can occur at any time after the wires have been inserted. Signs of infection include increased pain, increased temperature and/ or foul smell from the cast. If you think your child may have a wire infection please call the Paediatric Orthopaedic Clinic Nurses or go to Children's Emergency Department if after hours or over the weekend.

### K-wires migration

Occasionally wires can migrate (move) below the skin surface. If this happens, wire removal will be more difficult and an anaesthetic may be required therefore the wire removal will take place as a day surgery, not at the Starship Outpatient Department.

**If you have any questions or experience any problems, please contact us.**

### Clinic Hours (8.30am-5pm Monday-Friday)

**Please call** and leave a message for the Paediatric Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic Nurses on: **(09) 307 4949 ext 22537**

### After Clinic Hours

#### Please visit:

Starship Childrens Emergency Department, Level 2, Starship Childrens Hospital

**For more information, see our cast care video online at [starship.org.nz/orthoinfo](http://starship.org.nz/orthoinfo)**