

**Patient
Information**

Using a sling

Introduction

This leaflet gives you advice on using a sling and how it will help your recovery.

What is the purpose of using a sling?

An arm sling will protect and reduce the amount of movement of an injured arm; this will allow it to heal. A sling is important to the healing process because it supports your arm. It also acts as a sign to others to treat your arm gently.

If you have a neck or back condition, please tell the health practitioner treating you because a sling may not be recommended.

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol will help with any discomfort. Please follow the instructions in the pack.

Remove your sling several times throughout the day, unless you have been told not to. This will allow you to gently straighten your elbow and rotate your shoulder and wrist.

Do not wear your sling at night unless you have been told to so.

After _____ days you can stop using the sling.

Broad arm sling

This is used for arm injuries and sometimes for chest injuries. When correctly applied, the hand should be slightly higher than the elbow.

The base of the sling should lie at the root of your little finger, so that you can see your fingernails.



Figure 1: Broad arm sling

Reference No.

GHPI0941_02_24

Department

Emergency

Review due

February 2027

**Patient
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High arm sling

This is used to support the hand and forearm in a position to stop swelling and bleeding.



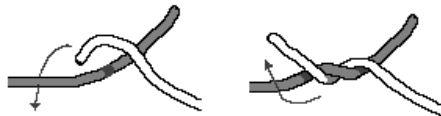
Figure 2: High arm sling

How to tie a reef knot

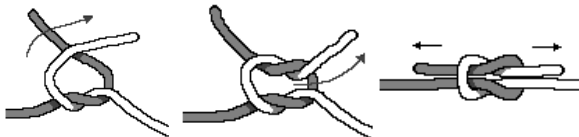
Always tie the ends of the sling with a reef knot. This will allow the sling to lie flat and not slip. It will also be easy for you to untie. Make sure the knot does not press onto a bone or into the skin at the back of your neck.

Method for tying a reef knot:

1. Right over left and under



2. Left over right and under. Pull ends to tighten.



Patient Information

Collar and cuff

This is a strip of foam material used to form a sling which will give extra stability of the arm. This sling is not usually removed until you have been reviewed and advised what to do.



Figure 3: Collar and cuff sling

Poly sling

Occasionally you may be supplied with a sling which is constructed from a non-stretch material with a comfortable padded lining. It has touch and close fasteners for maximum support and flexibility of use.



Figure 4: Poly sling

Additional information for those using a sling

A sling transfers the weight of your injured arm onto your upper back and neck. This can cause back and neck strain. Even if you do not have any strain at the time, you will probably notice that your sling causes the area between your shoulder to become tired and achy. You can reduce this by removing the sling at meal times and exercising your shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers.

Patient Information

To reduce your risk of developing back or neck strain, it is important to keep your back straight and avoid slouching.

If you can comfortably support your arm on the chair's armrest, you may do so.

If at any point while wearing a sling, you have severe neck or back pain, please contact NHS 111 for advice as soon as possible.

Avoid wearing a sling if you have a known neck or back complaint.

Further information

Any X-rays taken are looked at by our radiologists. If there is any concern that there may be a more serious injury, you will be contacted and asked to come in for a follow up appointment.

Contact information

Should you have any worries or concerns following discharge from hospital, please contact:

Trauma Triage

Tel: 0300 422 5269

Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 2:00pm

Email: ghn-tr.glostrauma@nhs.net

NHS 111

Tel: 111

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>