Lightning Learning: Clavicle Fractures

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East Midlands Emergency Medicine Educational Media

WHAT?

The clavicle (also called the *collarbone*) lies in the chest between the sternum and scapula, and supports the actions of the shoulder.

It is divided into thirds. These are called the **medial, middle** and **lateral thirds.**

It is commonly fractured following a fall onto the shoulder, though occasionally it can result from a fall onto an outstretched hand.

This type of fracture is common in all age groups, but is most common in younger people.

Majority of fractures involve the middle third (~80%) of the clavicle.

WHY?

Look for displacement **both** clinically and radiologically as this can damage underlying nerves & vessels.

If *skin tenting* is seen this suggests a displaced fracture. These need to be discussed with Orthopaedics as they often require surgical management.

Most clavicle fractures are managed conservatively using a broad arm sling and **heal with no issues in about 6 weeks.**

Patients are followed up to ensure the fracture is healing.

Discharge with the following advice:

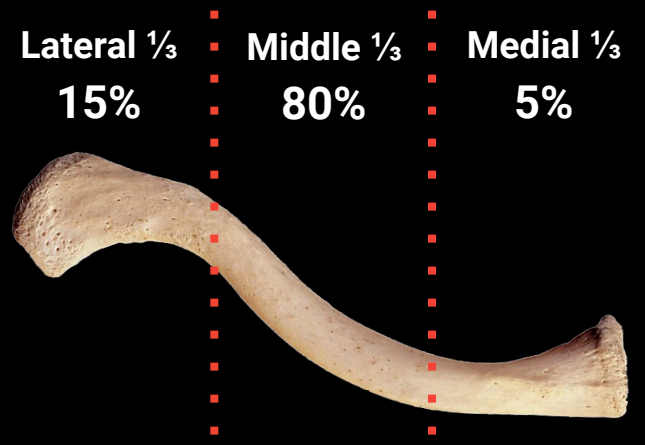
- Analgesia as required
- Sleeping more upright can help
- Gentle movement after 2 weeks or earlier if pain is controlled
- Return if any neurology develops

HOW?

Symptoms of a broken collarbone *(NHS.UK)*
http://bit.ly/2HuN68w

Clavicle Fracture (Broken Collarbone) *(OrthoInfo)*
http://bit.ly/2HwNcwD

Shoulder Examination Video *(Geeky Medics)*
http://bit.ly/2vauqlI



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