

Clavicle Fracture Fixation — Pre-Operative Patient Guide

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Clavicle Fracture (Broken Collarbone) — Open Reduction and Internal Fixation (ORIF)

Your Condition & Procedure

The condition

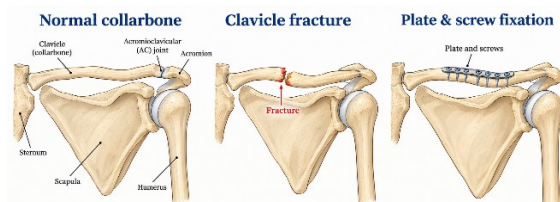
The **clavicle** (collarbone) connects your arm to your body. A **clavicle fracture** is a break in this bone, often from a fall onto the shoulder or a hard hit. When the break is badly shifted, shortened, or in several pieces, it may heal slowly, out of place, or not at all, causing pain, weakness, and shoulder fatigue.

The surgery

Open reduction and internal fixation (ORIF) is a typically outpatient surgery done through an incision over the collarbone. The broken pieces are put back in place and held with a metal plate and screws. Depending on the fracture, your surgeon may add a second small plate or a strong suture device to support nearby ligaments. The final plan is determined during surgery.

Risks & benefits

Benefits: Restoring the collarbone's length and alignment gives you the best chance of reliable healing and full shoulder function. **Risks** are uncommon and include infection, blood clots, delayed or failed bone healing, hardware irritation that may require removal, numbness of the skin below the incision (common and usually improves), injury to nearby structures (such as nerves, blood vessels, or the lung), stiffness, persistent pain, and the need for further surgery. These will be reviewed with you in detail before surgery.



Clavicle fracture and plate fixation (illustration)

Before Surgery

- **Medications:** We will tell you what to stop and when (e.g., blood thinners, anti-inflammatories, some supplements, weight-loss injections).
- **Fasting:** Follow the instructions from your surgery coordinator/facility. In general, you should have nothing to eat or drink starting at midnight the night before surgery.
- **Nicotine:** Stop all nicotine products—they slow healing.
- **Equipment:** A sling is typically provided before or on surgery day.
- **Physical therapy:** Schedule your first visit for within about a week after surgery.
- **Home:** Plan for a helper at first; sleeping propped up may be more comfortable.
- **Medical history:** Let us know if you or anyone in your family has a history of blood clot disorders or a malignant hyperthermia reaction to anesthesia.
- **Health:** Call us if you develop a fever, illness, or skin problem near the collarbone.

Day of Surgery

- If instructed, take blood pressure/heart medications with a small sip of water.
- Arrive at the time given by your surgery coordinator.
- Bring your medication list, insurance card, photo ID, and sling if you have them.
- Wear a loose, button-front shirt; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You may **not** drive yourself.

Immediately After Surgery

- You will recover in the recovery area; most patients go home the same day.
- Your surgeon will discuss the procedure with you and your support person.
- Your care team will review wound care, restrictions, medications, follow-up, and warning signs before discharge.

Milestone	What to Expect After Surgery (General Timeline)
Sling	Worn for comfort; typically weaned by about 2 weeks (about 4–6 weeks if a ligament-support device is used). Gentle motion starts right away.
Daily life	Desk work and light daily tasks within about 1–2 weeks; lifting about 1–2 lb at first, then about 5 lb until 6 weeks. No driving while taking narcotic pain medication.
Bone healing	Healing is typically confirmed on X-ray around 6 weeks; strengthening and heavier lifting then progress gradually.
Activity	Full activity, including contact sports, typically around 3 months, after strength testing and surgeon clearance.
► Please note: This is a general guide only. Detailed post-operative instructions will be provided on the day of surgery, and your restrictions and timeline may change based on the findings and procedures performed.	

Learn More

We **strongly recommend** reading these pages from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (OrthoInfo) before your surgery:

- **Your condition: Clavicle Fracture (Broken Collarbone)** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/clavicle-fracture-broken-collarbone/>
- **Your procedure: Internal Fixation for Fractures** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/treatment/internal-fixation-for-fractures/>

Video: You may find a video demonstrating an example (not the exact technique) of your surgery at

<https://patient.orthopedica.com/student/path/2191392-collarbone-fractures-clavicle-fractures> (or browse <https://patient.orthopedica.com/student/catalog>).