

Forearm Fracture Fixation — Pre-Operative Patient Guide

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Both-Bone Forearm Fracture (Radius and Ulna) — Open Reduction and Internal Fixation (ORIF)

Your Condition & Procedure

The condition

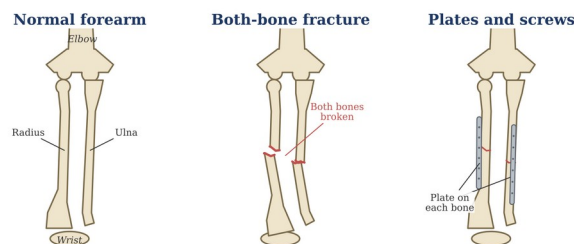
The forearm has two long bones, the **radius** and the **ulna**, that work together to let you turn your palm up and down. A **both-bone forearm fracture** breaks both, usually from a fall or a direct blow. In adults these breaks are unstable and tend to heal poorly in a cast, so surgery is usually recommended.

The surgery

This is a typically outpatient surgery through two incisions on the forearm. Each bone is lined up and held with a metal plate and screws, restoring its length and gentle curve so the forearm can turn normally. If the joint at the wrist or elbow is also injured, it is stabilized at the same time. The final plan is determined during surgery.

Risks & benefits

Benefits: Restoring alignment gives the best chance of healing and regaining forearm rotation and strength. **Risks** are uncommon and include infection, blood clots, delayed or failed bone healing, hardware irritation that may require removal, loss of forearm rotation, bone bridging between the two bones (rare), compartment syndrome (dangerous muscle swelling; rare), injury to nearby structures (such as nerves or blood vessels), stiffness, persistent pain, and the need for further surgery. These will be reviewed with you in detail before surgery.



Both-bone forearm 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 splint is placed at surgery; a removable wrist splint follows.
- **Physical therapy:** Typically starts ~2 weeks after surgery, when the splint comes off.
- **Home:** Plan for a helper and one-handed tasks at first.
- **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 forearm.

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 any splint or sling you were given.
- 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)
Splint	Splint and elevation for 10–14 days. Finger motion right away (make a full fist every hour); a removable wrist splint for comfort until 6 weeks.
Motion	Elbow, wrist, and forearm turning exercises start when the splint comes off; regaining palm-up and palm-down rotation is a priority.
Daily life	Desk work and typing often within 1–2 weeks. Lift only 1–2 lb (a coffee cup) for 6 weeks. No driving while taking narcotic pain medication.
Bone healing	Healing is checked on x-ray at ~6 weeks. Lifting up to 5 lb until 8 weeks, then weight through the hand and strengthening progress.
Activity	Full release typically ~3 months; contact sports once the bones have healed (typically 3–4 months).
► 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: Adult Forearm Fractures** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/adult-forearm-fractures/>
- **Your procedure: Internal Fixation for Fractures** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/treatment/internal-fixation-for-fractures/>

Questions before surgery? Call our office at (972) 378-1438. For a medical emergency, call 911.