

CLAVICLE FRACTURE (COLLAR BONE FRACTURE)

Overview

The clavicle lies directly underneath the skin and is one of the most common bones in the human body that is fractured. It connects the sternum with the scapula and is attached to these bones by strong ligaments. Most of the fractures take place in the middle third, followed by fractures towards the shoulder side and least often fractures towards the sternum side.

Causes

Clavicle fractures usually occur when a person falls directly on the shoulder or through direct impact over the clavicle like in a motor vehicle accident or sports injuries. The clavicle of a baby can also be broken as it is delivered through the birth canal.

Symptoms

Clavicle fractures are usually very painful with local swelling and tenderness and inability to move the shoulder or arm. Bruising may occur and often a knob might be palpable under the skin and might sometimes even be seen. A slip or crack feeling might be experienced during shoulder movements.

Classification

The location of the fracture, displacement thereof and whether other structures are involved will influence the classification. Comminution of the fracture and whether the skin is lacerated are also taken into account.

Treatment

Where there is no displacement of the clavicle fracture, most of them are treated with a sling until healing takes place. Where there is wide displacement or non-union, surgical repair might be indicated. Procedures differ according to the grade and the area of the fracture, but usually involve instrumentation by which the bone is aligned and fixed until bony union occurs.