



Biers Block and Plaster Casts

You have sustained a fracture (broken bone) at your wrist. The break has caused the bone to move out of its normal position and needs to be pulled back into place. This is called “manipulation” and if successful, could mean that you would not need to have an operation. In order to manipulate the broken bone, your doctor advises that you have a Bier’s block.

What is a Bier’s block?

This is a procedure that involves injecting a local anaesthetic, a medication that causes numbness to a part of the body, into a vein.

Beforehand, a tourniquet (a bit like a blood pressure cuff) will be applied to your arm and stay tight for the whole procedure. The tourniquet must stay inflated **for at least 20 minutes** and this is the part of the procedure that most people find uncomfortable.

The local anaesthetic is injected in to your vein, which will cause the entire arm to go numb, including where the break is. The break is then pulled back into position and your arm is placed in a plaster cast.

It is advisable to arrange for someone to take you home and make sure you can manage with your arm in a plaster cast.

What are the benefits of having a Bier’s block?

You will not require sedation and will remain awake throughout the whole procedure. Once it has been performed, a repeat X-ray is required to see if the arm is in a good position.

A successful manipulation usually means that you will not require any further interventions and often can be discharged home as soon as it is safe to do so.



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What are the risks of having a Bier's block?

Most patients feel a discomfort from the tourniquet inflating.

Serious side effects are extremely rare but could include low blood pressure, palpitations, loss of consciousness and seizures. This is why you are closely monitored throughout the whole procedure, and are supervised by an experienced senior doctor. Medication is available to treat serious side effects.

What are the alternatives?

There are alternatives such as having the fracture manipulated under a Haematoma block (local anaesthetic injected directly into the fracture site), sedation or general anaesthetic. All procedures carry risks and it is felt that the Bier's block is the best option we have available. Please ask about alternative treatment options in order to help you make the right decision.

What will happen if I decide not to have this done?

It is very likely that without manipulation, the bone will not heal properly. This could lead to chronic pain and arthritis and mean that you are not able to use your hand properly in the future.

Who should not have a Bier's block?

In the following patients it is inadvisable to have a Bier's block:

- Those with very poor circulation in their arms and legs;
- Those with poorly controlled high blood pressure;
- Those with sickle cell disease, lymphoedema or who require renal dialysis.

If you have any questions that have not been answered by this advice leaflet, please ask your doctor before continuing.



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Instructions to patients after application of plaster of paris

- If the fingers or toes become swollen, painful, blue or cold, report to the Emergency Department or your General Practitioner **At Once**.
- Elevate the limb for the first 24 hours.
- Keep all joints not enclosed in plaster moving freely, especially fingers and toes.
- If the plaster is uncomfortable through being too tight, too loose, is rubbing or becomes cracked or broken, report to the Emergency Department.
- Do not get the plaster wet.

How to look after your plaster cast

- **Do** exercise any joint not covered by the plaster.
- **Do** elevate the plastered limb as much as possible.
- **Do** inform the airline company if you intend to fly.

What to Avoid

- **Don't** get the plaster wet.
- **Don't** cut, knock or bump your plaster.
- **Don't** insert objects down the inside of the plaster cast.

Important: It is not advisable to drive while in a plaster cast.

You should notify your insurance company and the DVLA of any changes to your driving ability as soon as possible.

Please retain this leaflet for future reference.



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For further advice or information you can telephone your local Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Chippenham Community Hospital

Rowden Hill
Chippenham
SN15 2AJ

Tel: 01249 456 403/4

Open: 07:00am to 23:00pm; Seven days a week

Trowbridge Community Hospital

Adcroft Street
Trowbridge
BA14 8PH

Tel: 01225 711 329

Open: 07:00am to 23:00pm; Seven days a week

From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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