

DEALING WITH A PULLED ELBOW

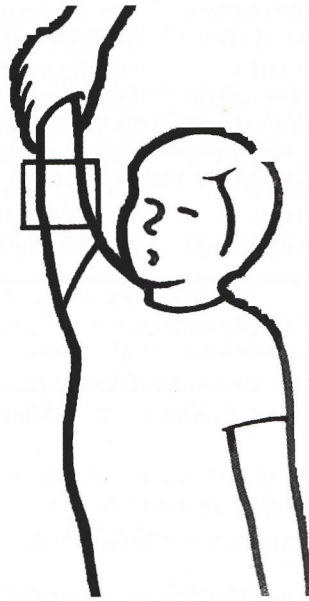
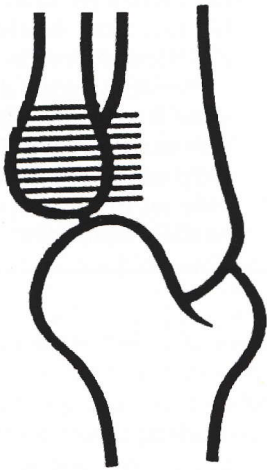


Figure 1: Mechanism of injury

A pulled elbow typically occurs in children under 8 years of age, usually at 2-3 years, when an adult applies sudden traction to the child's extended and pronated arm: the head of the radius can be pulled distally through the annular radio-ulnar ligament (Figures 1 and 2).

Symptoms and signs

- The crying child refuses to use the arm.
- The arm is limp by the side or supported in the child's lap.
- The forearm is pronated or held in mid-position.

Treatment method

1. Gain the child's confidence.
2. Place one hand around the child's elbow to give support, pressing the thumb over the head of the radius.
3. With the other hand, suddenly and firmly twist the forearm into full supination (Figure 3).

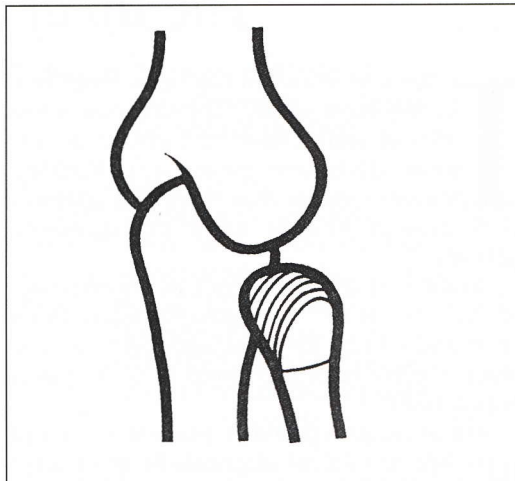


Figure 2: Annular ligament displaced over head of radius

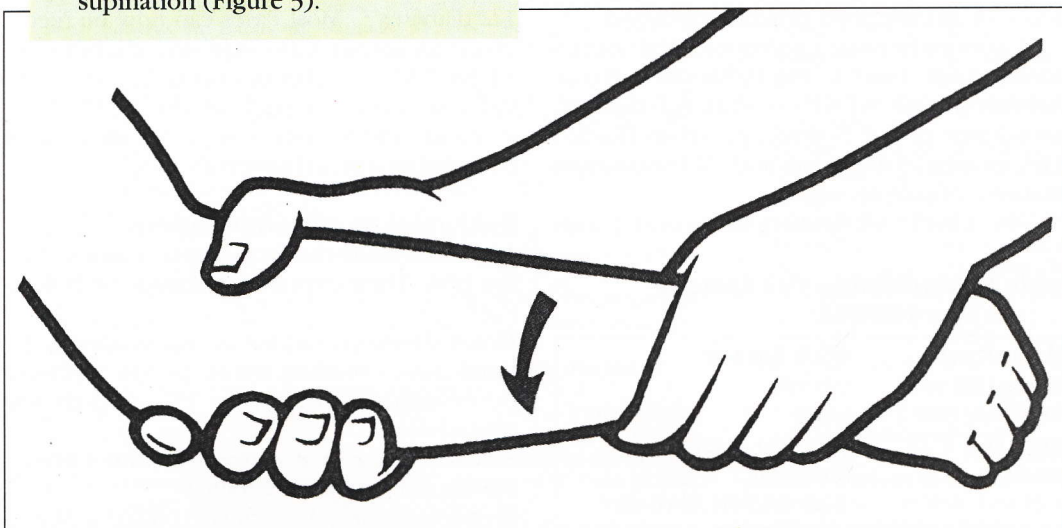


Figure 3: Reduction

These procedures are selected from 'Practice Tips' by Professor John Murtagh, published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1991.

We invite you to send in your practice tips for publication in this section. Send details of procedures that you find useful in your practice to:

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