

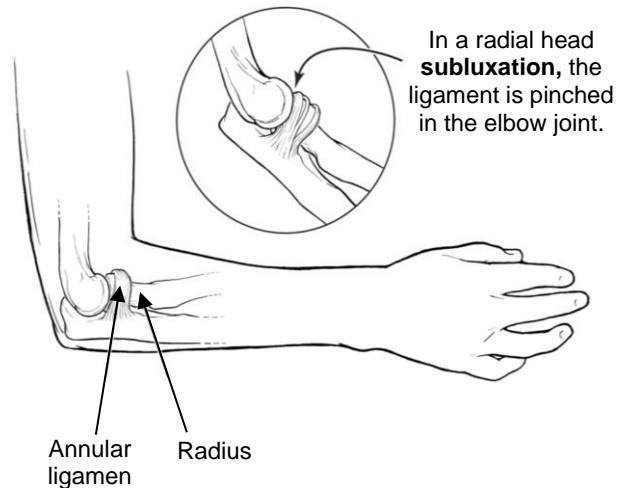
Nursemaid's Elbow

Radial head subluxation (sub-**lul**-say-shun), commonly called nursemaid's elbow, is when the elbow is partly, but not fully, dislocated. It happens when there is a ligament in the elbow that gets pinched. A ligament is a band of tissue that connects bones (Picture 1).

Picking a child up with just their hands is a common cause of nursemaid's elbow. It can also happen if your child pulls their hand or arm out of your hand. It's most common in children under 6 years old.

Signs

- Redness and swelling aren't common with nursemaid's elbow. But your child may:
 - Have pain in the wrist, elbow, or forearm but can't point to a single area of pain.
 - Avoid using their injured arm.
 - Hold their injured arm limply by their side.
- Do not force your child to move their arm. This may cause more damage to the joint.
- Tell your child's doctor or health care provider if you think they fell on their elbow or if something hit their elbow.



Picture 1 A normal elbow joint

Treatment

- Your child's doctor or health care provider will put the bone back into place. After that, your child may be afraid to move their arm. Try giving them a toy or drink to see if they can easily move their arm.

- The doctor or health care provider may suggest giving your child medicine, like acetaminophen (Tylenol®), to help with pain or tenderness.
- A splint may be put on your child. The doctor or health care provider will tell you how long to leave it on.
- In the first few weeks after the injury, there is an increased risk of the elbow subluxing again. It is important to watch your child's activities to prevent this from happening.

Prevention

You can help prevent nursemaid's elbow by picking your child up the right way. Also, teach them not to yank their arm or hand out of your hand. The correct way to pick them up is to:

- Use both hands and hold them carefully under the arms and around the trunk (Picture 2).
- Never lift them by their arms.
- Teach people who care for them to watch carefully if they pull away from them while holding their hand.
- Teach children not to grab each other's hands to pull them along.



Picture 2 The correct way to lift a child.

If you think your child has nursemaid's elbow, have them treated right away. This helps avoid the swelling that makes treatment harder and more painful.

If you have any questions, ask your child's doctor or health care provider.