

# How to Use a Sling

## *What is a sling?*

A sling holds your injured arm by your side. They are typically made of cloth, nylon, or a foam material and usually have adjustable straps.

## *Why are slings used?*

Slings are used when you have an injury that can be made worse or more painful by moving your shoulder, elbow, arm, wrist or hand (such as a sprained elbow, a broken arm, or a broken collarbone). Slings help keep your injured arm elevated, which reduces swelling. If your arm dangles by your side the swelling and pain gets worse. For some injuries a swathe is also used. A swathe is a band that straps around your chest over the sling, keeping you from lifting your injured arm.

You can put ice on your injury while you are wearing the sling. Your health care provider may put a splint or a cast on your arm before the sling is put on.

## *How should a sling fit?*

The sling should fit comfortably, with your elbow at one end of the sling and your hand at the other end. Your hand should be slightly higher than your elbow, and you should be sure that your fingertips can be seen in case they become discolored or swollen after the injury. The straps of the sling will fit around your neck.

Sometimes the sling strap will rub and irritate the skin on the back of your neck. To prevent this, wear a shirt with a collar or place a pad under the strap.

## *How long do I need to wear a sling?*

Your health care provider will tell you how long you need to wear your sling and if you can take it off to bathe or sleep. The length of time needed depends on what injury you have.