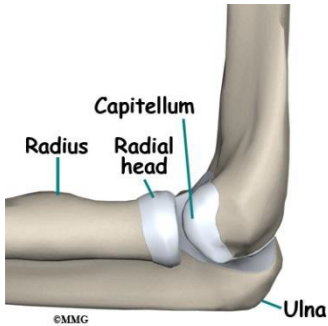


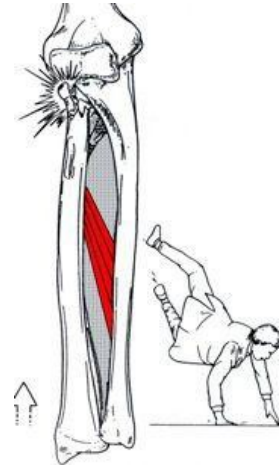


## Radial Head Fractures



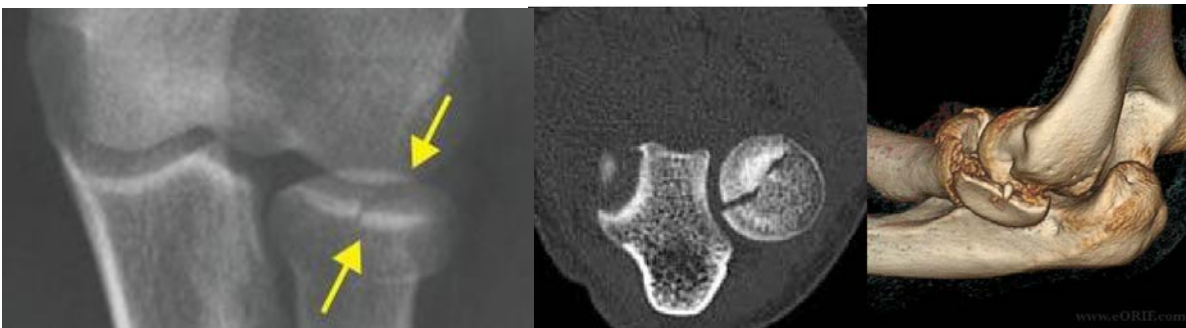
**What is the radial head?** The radial head is the most proximal portion of the radius bone. It is a secondary stabilizer to elbow stress. It is made up mostly of cartilage. It is on the outside or lateral aspect of the elbow.

**How does one fracture the radial head?** This almost always comes from a fall on an outstretched arm. The forces impact the radial head and cause injury. Often there is an associated ligamentous injury. The worse the radial head fracture is, the more likely there is a ligament injury as well.



**Who gets a radial head fracture?** They can occur in kids as well as adults. Most commonly, they occur in postmenopausal women after a routine fall due to osteoporosis. Radial head fractures also occur with high energy falls (ice, stairs, ladders). High energy injuries can have other fractures or ligament injuries associated with them.

**How is a radial head fracture diagnosed?** All patients have lateral elbow pain. This can go down the entire forearm. Often, they will have a limited range of motion of the elbow. Plain X-rays can make the diagnosis. CT scans are often ordered to check for alignment of the fracture pieces and the joint.



## How are radial head fractures treated?

1. **Non-operative:** Those with a non-displaced fracture with NO BLOCK or MECHANICAL symptoms with motion can be treated in a sling. There is often a ligament injury associated with the fracture so a slow increase in activity is required.
2. **Operative:** Those with a block to motion or an articular step off are treated surgically. If there are only one or two fragments to the fracture, it is reduced and fixed with screws. Often, the fracture is in too many pieces to ensure healing. In this case, it will be replaced with a metal end cap. This metal cap is called a radial head arthroplasty.

