Clavicle Fracture

What is it?

The clavicle, also known as the collarbone, is the bone that connects the sternum and the shoulder blade. This essentially connects your arm to the rest of the body. It is a long narrow bone. Most fractures occur in the middle third, but can occur at either end. In pre-adolescents, a fracture to the clavicle is routinely referred to as a Greenstick Fracture.

A direct blow, such as falling directly onto the shoulder, or a force to an outstretched arm, typically causes fractures, in both adults and children.

Symptoms:

- Decrease in range in motion due to pain
- Obvious deformity along clavicle that is not symmetrical
- Affected shoulder appears to sag down or forward compared bilaterally
- Swelling and tenderness directly on the clavicle

How is it diagnosed?

Clinical evaluation with recognition of the mechanism of injury, noticeable deformity, and review of x-rays will all help diagnose a clavicle fracture.

Treatment:

Treatment is dependent upon where the fracture is in the bone and how severe the fracture is.

Conservative treatment includes:
- Use of a sling (6 weeks?)
- use of Over the Counter pain medications to aid in pain reduction
- Formal physical therapy to prevent stiffening of the shoulder while in the sling, but also to strengthen your rotator cuff and scapular stabilizers.
- Re-evaluation and x-rays by your shoulder specialist will evaluate if it is healing correctly.
- Some instances a bone stimulator may be required to help with bone growth

**Surgical treatment**

Surgical treatment is for extreme cases, when the bones are out of significant alignment or the fracture is unstable. The actual procedure will be dependent on what your surgeon recommends. Post-operatively you will be in a sling and progressing to formal physical therapy.

In either treatment option, proper healing is needed to return to your activities. You need to follow closely to instructions given by your surgeon or shoulder specialist in the activity limitations to avoid further complications to the fracture site.