

MIKE FOSTER
Hand Wrist and Elbow Surgeon
Osteochondral Lesion Elbow

Problem

- Part of the joint surface of the elbow has been damaged and is struggling to heal

Cause

- Either trauma has led to an injury to the joint surface and dislodged a piece of cartilage and bone, or secondarily there can be a blood supply issue which leads to problems with vascularity to a certain area, leading to this developing a small loose bit of articular cartilage.

Diagnosis

- The patient has pain in the elbow and can develop locking symptoms.
- X-rays will usually alert the clinician to the possible diagnosis
- MRI scan is useful when looking at the size of the cartilage piece
- And a CT scan is useful for determining the bony component of the fragment.

Treatment

- Simple small lesions will sometimes heal by themselves
- And initially reducing activity levels and loads through the elbow is recommended
- **Surgery**
- If the fragment fails to heal it is then dependant on the size of the fragment and the size of the bony component to this.
Fragments with a large amount of bone are best treated with operative fixation, securing the osteo chondral fragment down with headless compression screws.
If the fragment is too small, then this should be removed and micro-fracture technique used to encourage scar cartilage to form.

Potential Complications

- Infection
- Haematoma
- Neurovascular Injury
- Stiffness to the elbow
- Failure of the fragment to heal
- Early arthritis developing in the elbow joint.

Post Op Care

- Elbow dressings and slab applied
- Sling for six to eight weeks until the lesion is healed.
- Hand therapy to regain motion, once the lesion is healed.

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