

CHAPTER 7  
BROKEN BONES

**Introduction**

1. The human body is built on a framework of bones and this is called the skeleton, which is illustrated at Fig 8.

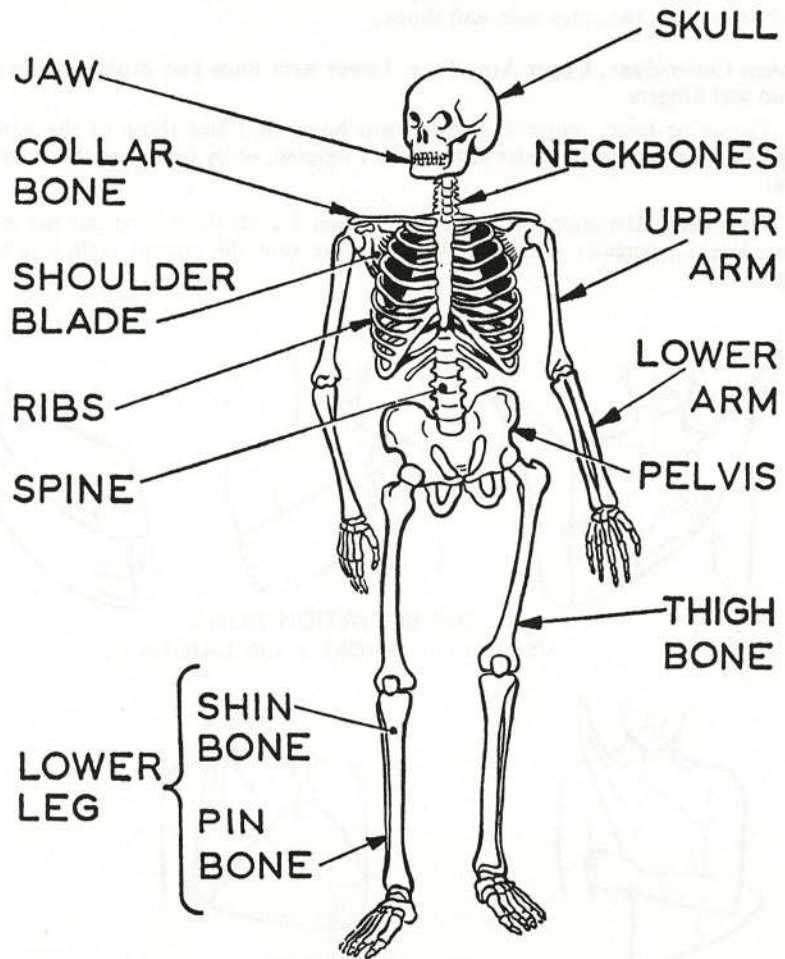


Fig 8 The Human Skeleton

**Symptoms**

2. A broken bone is a painful injury causing shock. The casualty cannot usually move the injured part. The site of the break will be painful to touch. The limb may be crooked and swollen. Sometimes the skin over the break may be torn; a jagged piece of bone may protrude.

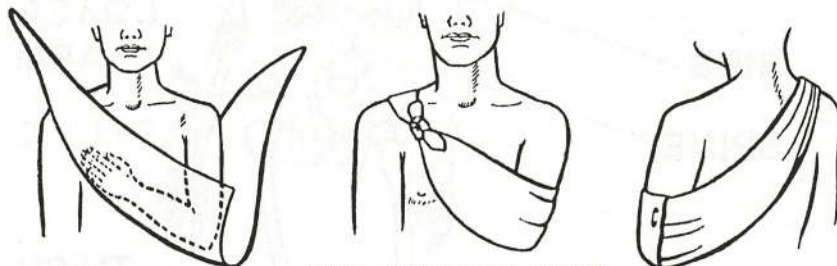
**Treatment**

3. The first thing to do is to relieve the pain and so relieve the shock. You can relieve a lot of pain by good treatment. When you treat a broken bone *you must support it and stop the broken ends moving about*. Never try to set it, and move it as little as possible. If you see a bit of bone pushing through the skin, don't push it back. Just put on a dressing. Be very gentle in handling broken bones. Movement of the broken ends increases pain and shock.

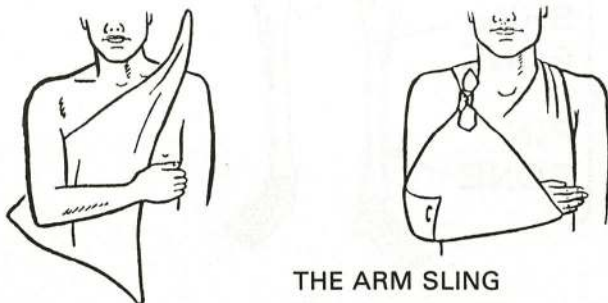
**Broken Collar-Bone, Upper Arm Bone, Lower Arm Bone and Broken Bones of Hand and Fingers**

4. The collar-bone, upper and lower arm bones and also those of the hands and fingers can be broken by direct blows with a weapon, or by falling on the outstretched hand.

5. **Treatment.** The simplest first aid treatment for all these is to put the arm in a sling. Use a triangular bandage. Always make sure the patient feels comfortable. (Fig 9).



THE ELEVATION SLING  
USED FOR BROKEN COLLAR-BONE



THE ARM SLING

Fig 9 Slings

**Broken Ribs**

6. Ribs are broken by a blow on the chest.
7. **Treatment.** Place the arm on the injured side in a sling. If blood is coughed up it means the lungs have been injured. Prop the casualty up inclined towards his injured side on a stretcher and take him to medical aid.

**Broken Backbone or Spine**

8. The backbone is broken by a fall from a height or a heavy blow on the back of the neck. Sometimes the arms and legs will be paralysed below the level of the injury.
9. **Treatment.** If you think the casualty has broken his backbone, *do not move him unless absolutely necessary*. Reassure him. Call the doctor to him as quickly as you can. But above all, do not move him at all unless you really have to. If you must move him:
  - a. Remove all hard articles from his pockets. If you have time, strap the arms to the side. Place some padding between knees and ankles and strap the ankles, legs and thighs together.
  - b. A casualty with a broken back should be treated and moved in the position in which he is found. Place a rolled blanket on one side of him; very gently and carefully work or unroll it underneath him. Use the blanket to lift him on to the stretcher very carefully. *Do not bend or twist his back*. If he is lying on his face, place him on the stretcher on his face. If he is on his back, place him on the stretcher on his back.
  - c. If his neck hurts, place him on the stretcher on his back, carefully rolling him over in one piece if necessary, and support his head on each side with pillows or rolled up clothing. If his neck does not hurt, keep his head still.

**Broken Thigh-Bone**

10. The thigh-bone is often broken in car accidents or by awkward falls.
11. Place the limbs together, always moving the good leg to the injured leg. Sometimes you may have to apply a firm but gentle pull to straighten the broken leg, but only do this if the casualty will let you. Place plenty of padding (soft material, grass, moss, *etc*) between the legs. Tie the ankles together with a figure-of-eight bandage, and then place a broad bandage across the knees. If he has to be carried for a long journey or over very rough ground, do the above, but try and tie a broad bandage above and below the site of the break, as well as around the ankles and knees.

*Note:* For all broken bones, it is best to support in the position most comfortable to your casualty. For lower arm breaks, always support with padding as well as placing in the arm sling. (Fig 9).

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