



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Shoulder dislocation injury

Information for patients who will
need to have a follow up appointment

Physiotherapy department

Patient information



What is this information about?

This information is about shoulder dislocation.

It tells you:

- How to look after yourself when you go home from hospital following recent shoulder dislocation injury.
- What exercises you can do to help heal and strengthen your arm.
- What follow-up treatment you might have.
- Who to contact if you need further help and support.

What is a shoulder dislocation injury?

Your shoulder is a ball & socket joint. The ball of the shoulder joint is made up of your upper arm bone (humerus), and a socket attached onto the shoulder blade (scapula).

A dislocation happens when the ball pops out of the socket. When the dislocation happens, the ball of the upper arm bone is no longer in the joint, but after treatment it is back in the joint.

How long is it likely to take for my injury to heal?

It usually takes 6 to 12 weeks for shoulder dislocation injury to heal. Use the sling for the first week and follow this care plan to allow the soft tissues to settle.

Will smoking or vaping slow down my healing?

Yes. Smoking slows healing so if you smoke or vape try to stop or cut down. This is most important in the first 2 weeks after your injury. If you would like help to stop smoking talk to your GP or visit **Quit smoking** www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking for further information.

What should I do if I am in pain after my shoulder dislocation injury?

There may be some swelling over your shoulder, and you will have some pain. If you are in pain, take your usual painkillers or painkillers given to you in A&E. Follow the dose instructions on the packet. If you are struggling with pain do contact your GP surgery or pharmacist.



Fig. 1. a shoulder sling

Put ice or a cold pack over the painful area for short term pain relief.

Be aware

Ice must never be in direct contact with the skin.

Why was I fitted with an arm sling?

You were fitted with a sling to support your shoulder. This allows the soft tissue structures around the shoulder to begin to heal.

When should I be wearing my arm sling?

Use your sling for the first week. You can take it off to wash, dress and do the initial exercises listed below. You must wear your sling at night for the first week. You may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up on pillows.

What should I do if I am struggling with my sling?

Do contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic. We can give you advice or arrange for your sling to be changed if needed.

When should I start exercising?

It is important to start gentle exercises straight away to prevent stiffness when you are doing the exercises which are shown later in this information.

Be aware

You should avoid any heavy lifting or overhead movement for the full 6 weeks after shoulder dislocation injury.

Will I have further (follow up) appointments?

Yes. We will refer you for physiotherapy.

You also will need to have a follow up appointment in the Fracture Clinic in 3 to 6 weeks after your injury. The specialist will examine your shoulder and decide if you need any further treatment. You will be sent an appointment time and date by post.

What should I do from week 1 to week 2 after my injury?

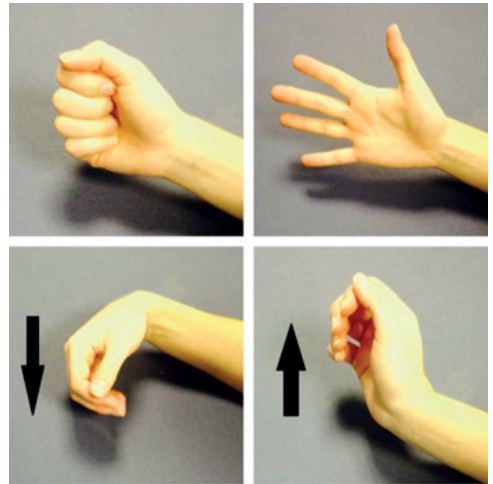
- Rest your arm for the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). However, it is important to keep moving around.
- Use your sling for the first week, including in bed at night. Take it off to wash, dress and do your exercises. You may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up on pillows.

- Move your fingers and wrist and elbow whilst wearing a sling, so they do not get stiff. Do this gently, without causing too much pain.
- Apply cold packs (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. Cold pack applications can provide short-term pain relief. However, the ice must never be in direct contact with the skin.
- Take arm out of the sling to wash, dress and do your exercises which are shown below.
- Aim to practice all exercises 5 times a day. These exercises should not cause too much pain. Do less if they are making your pain worse.

Hand, wrist and elbow exercises

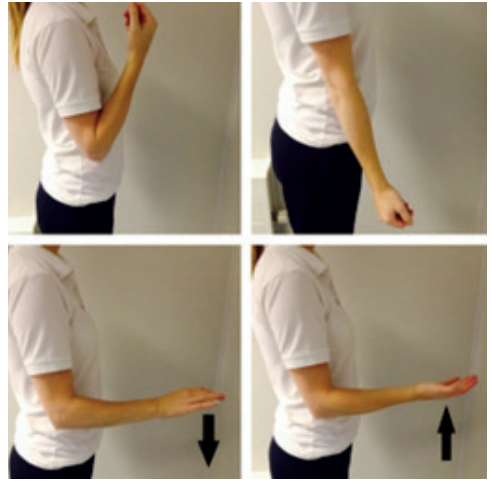
Finger and wrist bending and straightening: open and close your hand as shown **10 times**. Then move your wrist up and down **10 times**.

After around 3 to 5 days progress to holding a soft ball or ball of socks. Squeeze the ball as hard as possible without pain. **Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.**



Elbow Bending to Straighten:

bend and straighten your elbow as far as you can without pain. You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if you need to. **Repeat 10 times** if there is no increase in pain.



Forearm Rotations: keep your elbow at your side and bent to 90 degrees. Slowly turn your

palm up (supination) and down (pronation). You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if you need to. **Repeat 10 times** if there is no increase in pain.

Posture exercise:

Bring your shoulders back and gently squeeze your shoulder blades together. **Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.**



Shoulder pendulum (swing) exercises

Stand next to a firm surface. Support yourself with your un-injured arm and lean forwards. Let your injured arm relax and hang down to the ground.

Gently swing your arm, making a small movement. Try to do this forward and backward, side to side and in small circles.



Aim to do this for 1 to 2 minutes in total. This exercise can cause some discomfort when you first start to do it. This will usually ease off after you have repeated the exercise a few times.

Swing your arm gently so it does not cause you too much discomfort. Remember keep your arm relaxed.

What should I do from week 2 to week 4 after my shoulder dislocation injury?

- Stop using your arm sling. Reduce the amount of time that you are wearing your sling day by day until you feel that no longer need to wear it.
- Start using your arm for light activities. Start with gentle movements and be guided by any pain or discomfort you experience.
- Start the exercises shown below 2 weeks after your injury. Aim to do them 5 times a day. Repeat each exercise 10 times. These exercises should not cause too much pain. Do fewer if they are making your pain worse.
- You should not do any heavy lifting for 6 weeks.

Exercises:

Supported arm elevation

Use your other hand to lift your injured arm up in front of you, as shown in these pictures.



Supported arm rotation

With your elbow touching the side of your body, bend your injured arm as shown below. Hold onto a stick, umbrella, or something similar. Then move your injured forearm outwards away from your body. As you do this, keep your elbow bent and tucked into your side. Use your good arm to gently push the hand of your injured arm outwards. Remember to keep your elbow tucked in. If you do not have a stick, hold your injured arm at the wrist and guide it outwards with your good hand.



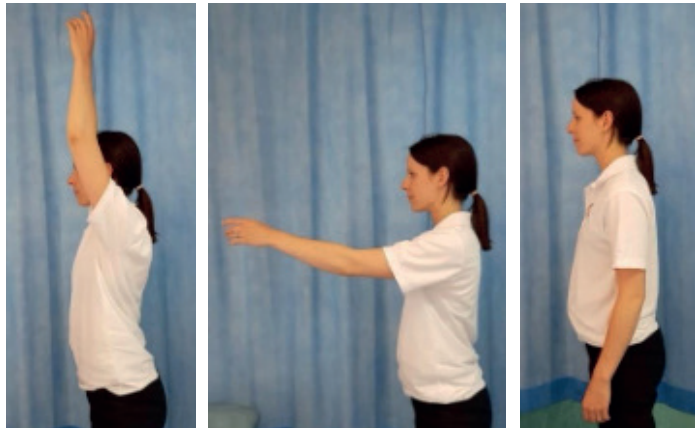
What should I do from week 4 to week 6 after my injury?

- Your injury should be largely healed.
- Return to normal light activities. Do this gradually and be guided by any pain or discomfort you experience. Some heavier tasks may still be uncomfortable.
- Movements above shoulder height are still likely to cause discomfort. When you have full range of movement without pain, using your other hand to support, you can start to do new exercises as shown below without the support of your other hand.
- Then when you have regained your full range of movement without the support of the other arm you can start to build up your regular activities.
- Avoid any heavy lifting or loading for 6 weeks after your injury.

Exercises:

Arm elevation

Lift your arm forwards in front of you. Try to raise the arm as high as you can. This exercise can cause some discomfort. You do not need to raise your arm so high or for so long that it causes too much pain. If this is too difficult, try the same movement with a bent elbow.



Raising your arm out to the side

With your palm facing forwards, move your arm out to the side in a big arc. Try to raise your arm as high as you can. If this is too difficult, try the same movement with a bent elbow. You do not need to raise your arm so high or for so long that it causes too much pain.



Arm rotation exercises

Start with your elbow bent by your side. Move your forearm out to the side, keeping your elbow bent and near your waist.



When should I contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic?

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic if you:

- Are concerned about your symptoms, especially 6 weeks after your injury.
- Are struggling to return to exercise or your usual activities 6 to 8 weeks after your injury.
- Would like further information or support after you have read this information.

When can I start driving?

You can return to driving when:

- You are no longer using your arm sling.
- You can turn the steering wheel as much as you need to without it hurting.
- You can safely deal with all emergency situations without being in pain or hesitating. For example, you must be able to stop the car quickly and in full control and safely avoid obstacles.
- You are covered by your insurance company.

Be aware

Always try driving in a safe place first.

How can I get a note for work?

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

How do I contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic?

Working hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

We aim to respond to messages within 24 hours during these times. At times you may receive a call outside of these hours.

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or scan the QR code



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