

Dislocations of the Shoulder

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

Introduction

The doctor has diagnosed you as having a dislocation of the shoulder. This information leaflet has been written to help you manage this injury at home. An appointment may also be arranged for you to see a physiotherapist.

What is a dislocation?

A dislocation is where a bone is displaced out of the joint. This is usually put back into place (or reduced) by a doctor in hospital. Sometimes this happens without any intervention. It may then be supported or rested in a sling, collar and cuff, or cast if you sustained a fracture (or break) at the same time.

Following a dislocation the soft tissues will also be damaged.

What is a soft tissue injury?

This includes sprains, strains, and bruises which affect the soft tissues of the body. Most commonly injured are the ligaments, muscles, tendons, and joint capsules.

How long will it take to heal?

There is no set time for a dislocation or a soft tissue injury to heal. The doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists will give you advice on what you can expect and what you should be doing. You should expect some swelling and discomfort for several weeks.

How can I manage my injury at home?

The regime of protection, rest, ice, and elevation is a simple and effective method of early treatment, particularly when swelling is present.

- **Protection:** This may include supports such as a brace or splint, tubular bandage or a sling
- **Relative rest:** Rest the affected area for the first few days, avoiding excessive activity, using any of the supports you have been given.

Use the following methods of treatment only if you have swelling in the hand and/or forearm:

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Ice – this is effective in reducing pain, inflammation, and swelling. **Do not use if the area is numb, you have weeping or bleeding wounds, you are diabetic, or you have problems with your circulation.** There are two methods for using ice.

1. Place ice in a bucket of water and place the affected hand in the bucket for 15-20 minutes
2. Wrap crushed ice or frozen peas in a damp tea towel to make an ice pack. Cover the affected area with oil to protect the skin and place the ice pack over the area for 15-20 minutes (10 minutes if this is a bony area).

If you have a burning sensation or notice any blistering, remove the ice immediately.

- Elevation – this helps to reduce swelling and inflammation. Elevate the swollen hand as much as possible in the first few days, this should be done for at least 20 minutes every two hours.

For the first three days DO NOT apply heat, massage the injury, or drink alcohol as these activities may increase bleeding or swelling.

Should I take pain relief?

Your doctor or pharmacist can advise on appropriate pain relief which, if taken regularly, can improve comfort and reduce muscle spasms. If your pain is well controlled you will manage exercises more easily which will aid recovery.

Should I wear a sling?

You may have been provided with a sling to support the arm. You will be advised how long to wear this for. Whilst the arm is in the sling no weight should be placed in the hand. The sling may be removed for washing, dressing, and exercise only. You may also be required to wear the sling at night, and you will be unable to drive.

How should I dress myself?

Try to wear clothes that open all the way down the front such as shirts and cardigans. Put the injured arm into the sleeve first when dressing and avoid tugging on the arm. When undressing, take the injured arm out of the garment last.

What is the best position to rest and sleep in?

If you are sitting it may be helpful to place a pillow under the arm for added support. Use of pillows, particularly a v-shaped pillow can limit movement at night and help sleep. It may take several weeks for it to become comfortable to lie on your injured shoulder. Lying on your back or other shoulder is therefore recommended.

Can I drive?

Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise you when it is safe to return to driving. You must be in full control of the vehicle before attempting to drive again. You should not drive whilst wearing a sling or brace.

When can I resume normal activities?

You can return to your normal activities and resume hobbies and sports gradually.

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury and you do not have a further appointment with the physiotherapy team, please contact the physiotherapy department on the telephone number given later in this leaflet.

Is there any movement or activity I should avoid?

Following a dislocation it is important to avoid certain movements or positions for at least the first six weeks to minimise the risk of re-dislocation. The movements and positions to avoid are as follows:

- Avoid reaching your hand behind your head or behind you with the elbow above shoulder height
- Avoid heavy lifting (particularly saucepans, kettles containing hot liquid and heavy shopping bags) especially with the arm outstretched
- Avoid pushing or pulling with the injured arm (hoovering for example)
- Avoid driving until otherwise instructed by your physiotherapist or doctor
- Avoid sports until otherwise instructed by your physiotherapist or doctor.

Why should I exercise?

Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness. Too much movement or the wrong type of exercise however may be harmful to tissue healing and it may cause inflammation which can increase your pain.

Following a dislocation it is important that you begin exercises but you should wait until the doctor or physiotherapist tells you to do so, as the joint will need to be rested initially.

Should you develop an increase in pain or develop any new pins and needles and/or numbness which do not subside in a day, please let your physiotherapist know as soon as possible.

Exercises – to be completed 3-5 times a day

Sit or stand. Place your hands on a table. Gently slide your hands forwards and back along the table as far as is comfortable. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand with your hands rested on a surface (do not lean through your hands). Keeping your shoulders and arms relaxed gently step backwards as far as is comfortable. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand or sit. Hold your upper arm close to your body with your elbow at a right angle. Using your unaffected hand turn the forearm of the affected arm outwards as far as is comfortable and then bring it back into the body. Repeat 5-10 times.



Lying on your back, elbow bent. Straighten your arm towards the ceiling. Repeat 5-10 times. Assist the movement with the other arm if this is difficult.



Stand or sit. Move your shoulder blades gently together and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand. Bend your elbow and then straighten your elbow. Repeat 5-10 times.



Other exercises to progress to once agreed with your Physiotherapist or Doctor

Stand facing a wall. Keep your Upper arm close to the side with elbow at a right angle. Push your fist against the wall. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand sideways against a wall with your upper arm close to your side and elbow at a right angle. Push the forearm to the side against the wall. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand or sit. Hold your upper arm close to your body with your elbow at a right angle. Try to move your hand outward, resisting the movement with the other hand. There should be no movement. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand or sit. Hold your arm close to your body with your elbow at a right angle. Try to move your hand inward, resisting the movement with the other hand. There should be no movement. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times.



Lying on your back, elbow bent. Hold a light weight. Straighten your arm to lift the weight towards the ceiling. Repeat 5-10 times.



Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall. Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line. Repeat 5-10 times.



Who should I contact if I have any concerns or questions?

If you have concerns or queries about any aspect of the advice given in this leaflet, please contact:

The Acute Trauma Physiotherapy Team
Emergency Department
New Cross Hospital
01902 307999 extension 88536

The team is available from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours please contact:

The Emergency Department
01902 307999, extension 84480

Glossary

Dislocation:

When a bone is displaced out of its usual setting in a joint.

Ligament:

A tough band of tissue which connects bone to bone.

Reduction:

A method used to return a dislocated bone to its normal position.

Tendon:

A flexible band of tissue which connects muscle to bone.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。