

# Shoulder pain

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy

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.

## Introduction

Shoulder pain is very common. One in three people will experience shoulder pain at some point in their lives. Although shoulder pain can be very uncomfortable it is rarely serious and will normally settle within six to 12 weeks without any treatment.

## Common causes

A number of factors have been associated with shoulder pain. These include:

- Sprain or strain or injury such as a fall onto your shoulder
- A sudden increase or decrease in your normal activity or exercise levels
- Muscle weakness
- Nerve irritation – pain travelling from the neck into the arm and sometimes affecting the hand
- Following a period of increased stress, worry or low mood
- Following a period of poor sleep, fatigue or feeling run down
- Other lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking
- A flare up of longstanding shoulder pain
- Other conditions

## Common symptoms

These include:

- Pain around the front, side or back of the shoulder. Sometimes pain may travel from the neck to the shoulder or arm
- Restriction in movement and or strength in your shoulder and arm
- Waking in the night especially if laying on the painful side

You may experience constant or intermittent (comes and goes) symptoms that are aggravated by certain activities and reduced by others.

## What can I do to help it?

- In the first few days after an onset of shoulder pain changing or reducing your usual activities may help. However, there is strong evidence that keeping active and gradually returning to all your usual activities and exercise will help you recover
- It is normal to experience some pain during your recovery, but it does not mean you are damaging your shoulder
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as you are able. Your employer, GP or health practitioner will be able to advise on how to return to your normal work duties
- Try some of these self-help tips to aid your recovery:
- Apply a heat or icepack, whichever you find most helpful, to the painful area – for up to 15 minutes. **Never apply heat or ice directly to the skin**
- A short course of simple pain medication as advised by your pharmacist or GP may help reduce pain and allow you to move more comfortably
- Keep moving. Regular movement and exercise is safe and helpful for shoulder pain. It is important to build up gradually – the exercise or activity you enjoy most, is likely to help your recovery
- Try and get a good night's sleep – place a pillow along your back to stop you rolling onto your painful side
- Good sleep habits and managing stress may help you cope better with your pain

## Facts about shoulder pain

- Shoulder pain is common **WITHOUT** any damage to the joint
- X-rays and scans often **DO NOT** show the cause of your pain
- Creaking or clicking sounds are common in the shoulder and are **RARELY** a sign of harm or damage
- Your shoulder can become stronger and healthier with regular movement and exercise
- Improving your sleep and general health is all also important for your shoulder pain

- An exercise programme is just as effective as surgery for many shoulder conditions in the long term
- Steroid injections may offer short term pain relief for some shoulder conditions. However, only one in five people will experience pain relief after an injection
- Your shoulder pain can often improve with the right management. So even if you have had it a long time regardless of your age, **DO NOT** give up and get a good plan that you can stick to

Common Causes of

# SHOULDER PAIN

## Frozen Shoulder

**SYMPTOMS**

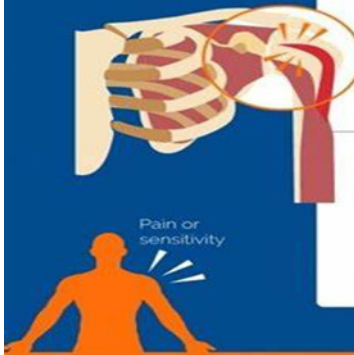
- Pain with any movement of the shoulder
- Limited range of motion
- Stiffness as your range of motion decreases

**CAUSES**

- Occurs when normal use of the joint is minimized or stopped altogether
- Can happen after an injury, a stroke, or in relation to chronic disease
- Happens mostly in people ages 40-70, and is more common in women

Limited range of motion

## Tendinitis



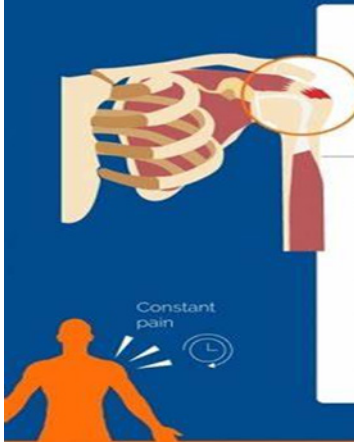
**SYMPTOMS**

- Pain or sensitivity in the front area of the shoulder
- Pain that travels down the arm and gets worse with overhead activity
- Sounds or sensations of snapping in the shoulder joint

**CAUSES**

- Repetitive motions or overuse of the biceps tendon, especially overhead use
- Sports such as swimming, tennis, and baseball
- Everyday wear and tear from job activities or normal chores

## Rotator Cuff Tear



**SYMPTOMS**

- Nearly constant pain, even at night—especially when lying on the shoulder
- Weakness while lifting or rotating the arm
- Discomfort when lifting or lowering the arm

**CAUSES**

**Acute**

- Bracing yourself with an outstretched hand in a fall
- Lifting a heavy object with a jerking motion

**Chronic**

- Repetitive stress that leads to tears from overuse
- Lack of proper blood supply to the tendons, which hinders the body's ability to repair injuries

## When should I seek medical advice?

### Call your gp surgery if

- Your pain is getting worse
- You have tried the self-help tips for three to four weeks and your symptoms have not improved

## Seek immediate medical advice if

- You have had a significant injury such as a fall from a height or a blow to the arm and are unable to lift your shoulder and/or arm
- You have sudden loss of power and/or feeling in one or both arms

## Do I need an X-ray or scan?

- X-rays or scans are **NOT** usually required to diagnose shoulder pain
- X-rays or scans are **NOT** able to tell us how much pain you are experiencing
- X-rays and scans often show osteoarthritis, rotator cuff tears, tendinopathies and bursitis which are common in people **WITHOUT** shoulder pain and is unlikely to change the way you manage your pain
- X-rays and scans are best used where a serious injury (for example, a broken bone) or conditions such as cancer or infection are suspected

## Why exercise?

It is important to get the shoulder moving early in order to gain mobility, strength and return to normal function. Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness.

## Shoulder exercises

These are suggested exercises and are to be performed within comfortable limits. If you have any concerns about any of the exercises, please seek medical advice.

1. Stand at the wall with the arms in a 'W' shape. Gently draw the elbows down, squeezing the shoulder blades together making the space between the shoulder blades shorter. Hold this position for five seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, two times per day. Alternatively, sitting in an upright position with the head in good alignment (do not poke the chin forward). Draw the shoulder blades together, hold for the count of five. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



2. Sitting at a table, palms flat on the table. Slide the arms forward and allow the body to follow to stretch forward across the table. Reach as far across the table as you can. Hold for five seconds, repeat 10 times, two times per day.



3. Stand with both hands on a wall at shoulder height, palms flat. Step towards the wall, sliding both hands together up the wall as far as you can, keeping your body square to the wall. Hold for five seconds and slide back to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



4. Standing at the wall with your feet apart. Place your hands on the wall, shoulder width apart. Engage the tummy muscles by gently pulling the naval towards your spine. Breathe normally. Maintain this activation throughout the exercise. Bend the elbows and move the body towards the wall, keeping the back straight. Then push away from the wall to return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



5. Stand with your elbows bent to 90 degrees and tucked in against the body, palms facing up. Take the forearms out to the side, keeping the elbows tucked in. Bring the forearms back to midline then fold the arms across your tummy. Repeat 10 times, two times per day.



## Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury please use the PHIO self-referral platform or scan the QR code below.



## Do I need a fit note?

- If you're off work sick for **seven days or less**, your employer will normally ask you to complete a self-certificate for sick leave as soon as you return to work
- If you're off work sick for **more than seven days** your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or hospital doctor
- You can read more information here <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/when-do-i-need-a-fit-note/>

## Useful websites and resources

- British Elbow and Shoulder Society (BESS) <https://bess.ac.uk/patient-information/>
- ShoulderDoc <https://www.shoulderdoc.co.uk/article/10>
- What should you know about joint health? What should you know about joint health? – Body Logic <https://bodylogic.physio/what-should-you-know-about-joint-health/>

# Accessing information and support to make healthy lifestyle choices

## Online support:

### Exercise

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips>
- <https://www.nhs.uk>conditions>nhs-fitness-studio>

### Sleep

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

### Diet

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>

### Emotional well being

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

## 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 potrzebowałiby 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。