

Traumatic Shoulder Injury

Paediatric Management Advice Leaflet

What is a traumatic shoulder injury?

Your shoulder can be injured by lifting heavy objects, falling onto it, over stretching, wrenching it, or by over using it. Your child may feel sharp pain or aching that can feel close to the joint or deep inside the shoulder. There are many ligaments, muscles and tendons that can get injured during a fall or wrench to the shoulder.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain during reaching and lifting, playing (i.e. throwing) or lying onto your injured shoulder.
- Pain is often sharp to begin with but will commonly turn to an ache within a couple of weeks. Your child may have pain and restriction but if this is significantly limited please seek medical attention.

Important signs and symptoms to look out for

If your child experiences any of the following symptoms, please seek further urgent medical advice.

- Significant amounts of swelling immediately after the injury to the shoulder/arm.
- Worsening, severe pain and/or night pain around the shoulder.
- Unable to lift the arm away from the side or place any weight throughout.
- The joint feels deformed or out of place or the shoulder blade sticks out.
- Numbness or pins and needles in your arm/hand.
- Feeling generally unwell or unexplained weight loss.
- Night sweats.

Only continue to read if you have none of the above symptoms.

Should I be resting or moving?

Recent Injury - For the first 24 to 72 hours

- Try to rest your shoulder but avoid long spells of not moving at all.
- Try to move your shoulder gently for 30 seconds every hour when you are awake.

After 72 hours

- You should try to use your shoulder more.
- Try and do your normal activities.
- Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less pain and good movement.

Should I take pain killers?

Pain killers can help you keep moving. However, it is important to discuss this with your GP or pharmacist, especially if you are taking other medication.

Should I use ice or heat?

Use **Ice** (crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas) wrapped in a damp towel in the first 24-48 hours. Hold 10 to 15 minutes against the part that hurts, every 2 to 3 hours.

Heat is recommended if you have had a recent flare up of a shoulder problem. Use a hot water bottle or heat pad, wrapped in a towel. Make sure it is not too hot and does not directly touch your skin. Use for 10-15 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day.

What about activity/sports?

Try to stay active and keep moving gently. You should take time before returning to any sports after a shoulder injury, as if you take part in sport too soon you could get injured again. Remember to warm up before any activity. Before participating in sports, you should:

- Be able to move your shoulder fully.
- Be pain free.
- Have full or close to full strength and be able to take weight through your arm.

Physiotherapy

- It is important to keep your child's shoulder moving, even if it is painful to move, as the evidence has shown that completing basic exercises helps the soft tissue to heal.
- In most cases you and your child will not need to be seen by a Physiotherapist for rehabilitation. Following exercises provided in the leaflet should aid recovery.
- If after 3 weeks your child is still having problems, please contact the paediatric Physiotherapy service on the number provided to book an assessment.

Exercises — Phase 1 — Movement

Completing these exercises 3-4 times per day will help maintain range of movement. Try to use your shoulder as normally as pain allows.



Pendulum swings

In standing, hold onto a support and let your sore arm rest in front of you. Slowly move your arm in different directions: side to side, forwards and backwards and in a small circle. Repeat 10 times.

Supported shoulder flexion in lying

In lying, support your sore arm with your other arm. Slowly use your good arm to assist moving your sore arm above your head and back. Repeat 10 times.



Assisted external rotation in lying

In lying, place a towel under the shoulder blade of your sore shoulder. Hold a stick (walking stick, crutch, rolling pin) in both hands. Slowly use your good arm to move your hand towards the towel and back. Repeat 10 times.

Exercises — Phase 2 — Strengthening

Once you are able to complete the exercises in phase 1 comfortably, move on to phase 2.



Isometric abduction against wall

Standing tall next to a wall, bend your elbow and make a fist with your sore arm. Place your forearm against the wall and slowly push into the wall with your arm. Hold for 20 seconds before relaxing. Repeat 3 times.

Isometric flexion against wall

Standing tall in front of a wall, bend your elbow and make a fist with your sore arm. Place your fist against the wall and slowly push forward. Hold for 20 seconds before relaxing. Repeat 3 times.





Assisted flexion against a wall

Stand in front of a wall, with your sore arm in front of you. Slowly crawl your fingers up the wall so that your arm is above your head, before slowly crawling down. Repeat 10 times.

Isometric external rotation against wall

Standing tall next to a wall, bend your elbow and make a fist with your sore arm. Place your fist against the wall and slowly push into the wall with your fist. Hold for 20 seconds before relaxing. Repeat 3 times.



Exercises — Phase 3 — Further strengthening and proprioception

Once you have completed the exercises in phase 2 comfortably, move on to phase 3. To help prevent further injuries, it is important to build your proprioception.



Throw and catch against a wall

Stand in front of a wall holding a ball. Slowly throw the ball with your sore arm to the wall and try and catch it with either one or both hands. To progress this exercise complete a step up, onto a step or low box, as you throw the ball. Use alternate legs to step up. Repeat over 30-60 seconds.

Superman

In kneeling, make sure your knees and hands are hip width apart. Slowly lift one arm in the air and hold for 10 seconds before slowly coming back down. Repeat with both arms. Repeat 10 times.



Shoulder press up against a wall

Standing against a wall with your hands just wider than your shoulders, slowly bend your elbows so that your chest moves towards the wall. Then return to the start position. Repeat 10 times.

Paediatric Physiotherapy Service		Author: Physiotherapy	
ID No: PHYSIO - 016 – Traumatic Shoulder Injury		Version: 004	
Date of Issue: April 2020		Review Date: April 2023	
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