



# Traumatic Shoulder Injury

## Information and Exercise Leaflet

**Your shoulder** can be injured by lifting heavy objects, falling onto it or a wrenching injury for example grabbing a rail to prevent a fall. You may feel sharp pain or aching that can feel close to the joint or deep inside the shoulder.

As you get older, normal wear and tear can mean that even a small incident can cause a flare up of pain.

### Symptoms

Pain is commonly caused during reaching and lifting, lying onto your injured shoulder and getting out of the car / chair.

Pain is often sharp to begin with but will commonly turn to an ache within 10 days. You may have pain and restriction but if this is significantly limited please seek medical attention (see 'should I get medical attention section below').

### Causes

There are many ligaments, muscles and tendons that can get injured during a fall or wrench to the shoulder.

## **Should I get medical attention?**

Please go to A+E or speak to your GP if you have any of the following symptoms:

- You cannot lift your arm away from your side
- Your joint feels deformed or out of place or your shoulder blade sticks out
- You are unable to put weight through your arm
- You developed large amounts of swelling immediately after your injury.
- Numbness or pins and needles in your arm/hand

***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 whatever you would normally do and stay or return to work.
- Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less pain and good movement
- Avoid lifting with the elbow away from the body

## **Should I take pain killers?**

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

## **Should I use ice or heat?**

- If you have recently injured or you have any swelling in the shoulder then wrap crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas in a damp towel and hold it for 10 to 15 minutes against the part that hurts. You can do this every two to three hours. Make sure you use a damp towel between the ice and your skin to avoid ice burns.
- Alternatively you could try gel packs, which do a similar job.
- Some people find that heat is more relaxing. This is not recommended if you have injured your shoulder within the last 7 days but if you have had a recent flare up of an old shoulder problem then you could use a hot water bottle or heat pad. Make sure it is not too hot and doesn't directly touch your skin. You can use this for 10-15 minutes, three to four times a day.

### **What about work?**

- You will recover faster and everybody will benefit if you can stay at or get back to work as early as possible. Do not worry if your shoulder still hurts, as you may only have to do light work at first. Speak to your manager or occupational health team about how to go about this. Try to stay active and keep moving gently.

### **What about sports?**

- You should take time before returning to any sports after a shoulder injury.
- If you take part in sport too soon you could get injured again.
- You should have no swelling and be able to move your shoulder fully.
- You should have full or close to full strength and be able to take weight through your arm and lift normally.
- Remember to warm up and stretch before sports.

## Exercises

### Exercise 1



#### Seated Table Slide into Flexion

Sit down and rest your hands resting palm down on a towel on a table. Slide your hands forwards as far as feels comfortable as you lean forward. This exercise improves flexion in your shoulder.

Start with 5 repetitions adding 1-2 further repetitions each day building up to 10.

Try to exercise 2-3 times daily.

### Exercise 2



#### Seated Table External Rotation with Dowel Rod

Sit next to a table with your elbow supported on the side of your painful shoulder. Hold a walking dowel rod, golf club or walking stick in both hands. Use your good arm to push your painful arm gently outward. Keep your elbows into your side. This is a passive mobilisation to improve external rotation of your shoulder.

Start with 5 repetitions adding 1-2 further repetitions each day building up to 10.

Try to exercise 2-3 times daily.

### Exercise 3



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#### Step Back Flexion Standing Straight Arm

Stand up, and place your hands on a high table. Step one foot backwards but keep your hands connected to the table surface, allowing your shoulders to flex. Keep the exercise comfortable. This exercise improves flexion in your shoulders.

Start with 5 repetitions adding 1-2 further repetitions each day building up to 10.

Try to exercise 2-3 times daily.

### Exercise 4



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#### Active External Rotation Side-Lying

Lying on your good side, tuck your elbow in, keeping it next to your body, and move your arm outwards away from your stomach. This is a mobility exercise for your shoulder.

Start with 5 repetitions adding 1-2 further repetitions each day building up to 10.

Try to exercise 2-3 times daily.

## What actions can I take to improve my health?

Evidence tells us that making healthy lifestyle choices can have a big impact on influencing problems with your muscles and bones and can play a major role in your overall health. Some of the most effective areas to address are below: (click on the links)

### Maintaining a healthy weight

Link: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/)



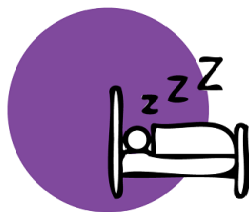
### Increasing levels of physical activity

Link: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/)



### Avoiding poor sleep patterns

Link: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/)



### Reducing alcohol consumption

Link: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/)



### Stopping smoking

Link: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/)



### Maintaining a healthy mind

Link: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/)



The **good news** is that you can influence lots of these by modifying your lifestyle. Therefore, it is important that you consider addressing these areas alongside your current treatment.

You may wish to discuss any of these factors with your treating clinician who will be able to work with you and guide your long- term management and support you to improve your wellbeing.

There will be information about the local services that exist within the waiting areas of the physiotherapy department and your treating clinician will be able to help signpost you to appropriate services.

There are some websites below that give more information on local services available:

- Blackburn and Darwen: <https://refreshbwd.com/>
- East Lancashire: <http://www.upandactive.co.uk/>
- Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

## Applications (Apps)

The ORCHA website will recommend useful and rated apps to support your wellbeing.  
<https://www.orchha.co.uk/>

### Warning Signs

**If you have severe pain which is getting worse over several weeks, if you are unwell, or under the age of 16 years, you should consult your doctor.**

**The following symptoms are very rare, but if you suddenly develop any of them, you should consult your doctor straightaway.**

- Significant swelling to the arm
- Feeling generally unwell
- Sign of infection i.e. does your joint feel hot and swollen to touch compared to the other side, night sweats that are out of the ordinary, high temperature and feeling unwell.
- Constant night pain (unable to rest/sleep)
- Unexplained weight loss
- Loss of feeling such as numbness or pins and needles in your hand / wrist / arm
- Loss of control of hand movements or strength or grip (dropping objects)

**If your symptoms fail to improve within 6 weeks with this regime you should contact your doctor for a physiotherapy referral.**



If you require this document in an alternative format or language, please contact:

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Tel: 01254 736041 Email: [elmsk@nhs.net](mailto:elmsk@nhs.net)

**Polish**

W celu otrzymania tego dokumentu w innym formacie lub języku, prosimy o kontakt z

**Punjabi**

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਵਿਕਲਪਿਕ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੋੜੀਂਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ

**Urdu**

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کی ایک متبادل شکل (فارمیٹ) یا زبان میں ضرورت ہے تو براہ مہربانی رابطہ کریں

**Bengali**

আমনি যদি এই প্রচারপত্রটি অন্য কোন আকারে বা অন্য ভাষায় চান, তাহলে যোগাযোগ করবেন

**Romanian**

Dacă aveți nevoie de acest document într-un format sau limbă alternativă, vă rugăm să contactați

**Lithuanian**

Norint gauti šį dokumentą kitu formatu ar kita kalba, prašome susisiekti su mumis

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