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Shoulder injuries

***Information for
patients and carers***

Accident and Emergency

Your shoulder injury

Your shoulder is supported by a large range of muscles and tendons and often these are damaged with strain or overuse.

A doctor or an experienced Emergency Nurse Practitioner has assessed your shoulder problem. You may not have had an X-ray if there has been no trauma to your shoulder or there is no sign of a bone fracture when you were examined.

How can I help myself?

You can do a lot to help your pain and to recover more quickly. Most sprains and strains can be managed at home. The first treatment is to calm the inflammation and control the swelling and pain.

For the first 48 to 72 hours after your injury:

Rest:

Rest will help prevent further injury and allows the healing process to begin. For the first few days, reduce the amount of movements and activities you do. Gently move your shoulder regularly to avoid stiffness. Avoid forceful and strenuous activity such as running and lifting.

Ice:

Some people find cold beneficial. You can use ice, a cold pack or a bag of frozen peas (wrapped in a towel), applied for 20 to 30 minutes to the affected area. Remember that you can get an ice burn; it should not feel uncomfortable.

Pain control:

It is important to take pain relief regularly to reduce the pain and help you keep mobile. Paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective painkillers if taken regularly. We don't usually provide these as you can easily buy them over the counter at chemists and many other shops.

Please read the instructions on the packets carefully for the dosage. Please also check if there are reasons why you may not be able to take these medications. Your family doctor or pharmacist can advise you.

Heat:

A hot bath/shower, hot water bottle or heat pack (wrapped in a towel) can help reduce non-traumatic pain. This should be comfortable and not burn the skin. The heat can be applied for 15 to 20 minutes.

Avoid heat for 72 hours after a traumatic injury, as this may increase bruising and swelling.

Exercises to help your recovery

Getting moving again as soon as you can is important for muscular pain. Gradually build up your activities and exercises over a few days or weeks. Avoid activities that make your symptoms worse such as heavy lifting, repetitive movements or certain sports.

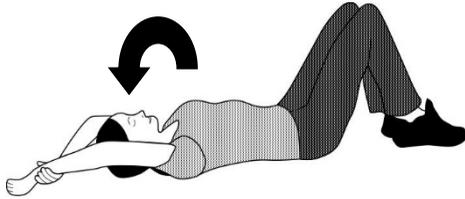
In most cases, shoulder disorders improve over time if treatment advice is followed.

Repeat the exercises on the following pages 3 to 5 times twice a day.

- * There are videos of exercises marked with “*” on the NHS Inform website (www.nhsinform.scot). From their home page, click on “Illnesses and conditions”, then “Muscle, bone and joints”, select “Exercises” and choose “Exercises for shoulder problems”.

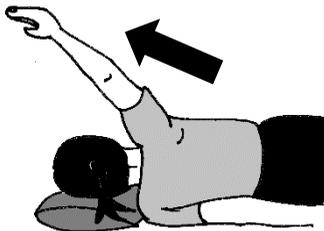
Exercise 1 (clasped arm raise*):

Lying on your back with your elbows straight, use your good arm to lift the affected arm above your head



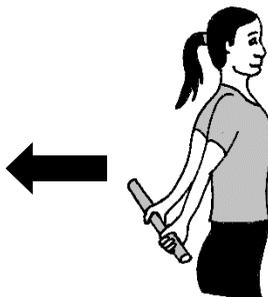
Exercise 2:

Lying on your good side, lift the affected arm up sideways with your thumb leading the way.



Exercise 3:

While standing, hold a stick with both hands behind your back. Push backwards, keeping your body upright.



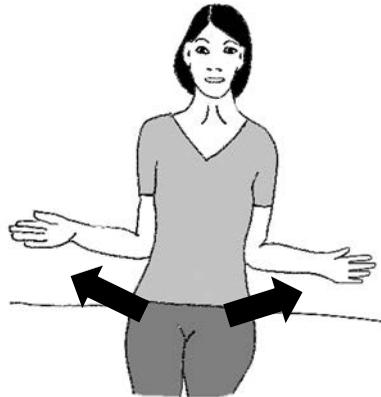
Exercise 4:

Stand with your arms behind your back. Hold your wrist or forearm on the affected side and slide your hands up your back.



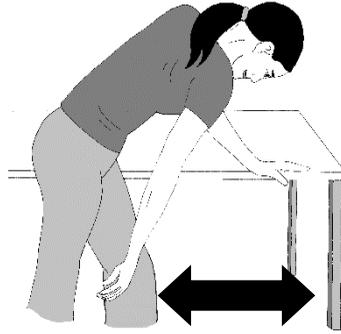
Exercise 5 (forearm turn*):

Sit or stand, keeping your upper arms close to your sides and your elbows at right angles. Turn your arms outwards.



Exercise 6 (arm swings - back and forward*):

Stand leaning on a table with one hand (your good arm). Let your other arm hang relaxed straight down. Swing your arm backwards and forwards.



Exercise 7 (arm swings – side to side*):

Stand leaning on a table with one hand (your good arm). Let your other arm hang relaxed straight down. Swing your arm to the left and then to the right.



Exercise 8 (arm circles*):

Stand leaning on a table with one hand (your good arm). Let your other arm hang relaxed straight down. Swing your arm as if you're drawing a circle on the floor. Change direction and swing in a circle again.



- * **Remember:** There are videos of exercises marked with “*” on the NHS Inform website (www.nhsinform.scot). From their home page, click on “Illnesses and conditions”, then “Muscle, bone and joints”, select “Exercises” and choose “Exercises for shoulder problems”.

Who do I contact for more advice?

If you have allowed significant time for your injury to settle, done your exercises regularly but feel you are still having problems, contact your GP.

You can also contact the national non-emergency help service for advice, information and assessment of muscle and joint problems:

Scottish NHS helpline for muscle and joint problems

 0800 917 9390

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

 www.nhsinform.scot

If you have any questions about your treatment, please call the Accident and Emergency Department on:

Accident and Emergency Department

 01224 553306 or 01224 550506 

This leaflet is also available in large print.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on 01224 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1598.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call 01224 554149 to let us know.