NHS
University Hospitals
Coventry and Warwickshire
NHS Trust

Emergency Department

Shoulder Injury: Care Advice

Following acute injury to the shoulder joint (excluding dislocations) it is important to both rest the affected joint and attempt to maintain movement.

Ice

The application of “cold” following an injury helps reduce swelling and pain. Wrap a bag of frozen peas in a damp towel before applying it to the skin to prevent an ice burn. Hold the ice in place for 10-20 minutes and repeat this every two hours until the swelling and/or 'heat' from the injury has gone away. Do this for **at least** the first 48 hours.

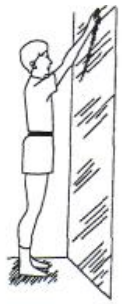
Rest and support

It is important to allow your shoulder to rest more then normal during the early phase of healing - this prevents the area being stressed, if the arm is well supported this will help to reduce pain. If a sling has been applied to support the limb, please ensure you’re your forearm is horizontal and that your sling is adjusted to hold it thus. However, you should not rest completely as this will slow your recovery. Take some painkillers if needed to enable you to move the shoulder.

Exercises

Following shoulder injury it is important to maintain the movement of the shoulder joint, otherwise it becomes stiff very quickly. These should be done gently and should not be too painful. You should start the exercises as soon as possible and try to do them at least four times a day. Try to do each one 10 times until you are better. Remove your arm from the sling when exercising.

Exercise 1: Arm forwards



Stand facing the wall. Walk the fingers of your injured arm up the wall.

Step closer to the wall as needed. Slowly lower your arm using your other hand to support your injured arm until you can use your shoulder muscles comfortably against gravity.

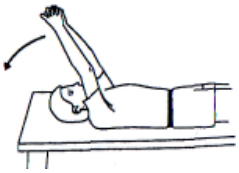
Exercise 2: Arm out to the side

Stand with your injured side to the wall. Walk your fingers up the wall.

Step into the wall as needed. Slowly lower your arm using your other hand until you can use your shoulder muscles comfortably against gravity.

Exercise 3: Arm above head

Lie on your back with your knees bent and hold your fingers together



to help move the injured arm. Slowly bring your arms up over your head,

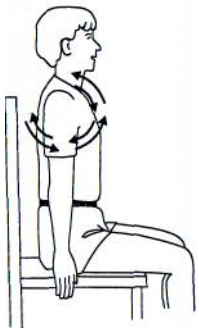
keeping your arms close to your ears. Then bring your arms back down

towards your stomach

Exercise 4: Pendulum

Bend at your waist with your injured arm hanging down and your other arm supporting your upper body on a table. Relax your arm completely until it feels 'heavy'. Slowly swing your arm forward and backward, side to side across the body and in circles in both directions.

Exercise 5: Shoulder circling



Roll your shoulders forwards and then backwards slowly. Try and make the circles as round as you can without forcing any movement.

For further information and advice contact your GP.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6200 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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