

Soft tissue shoulder injury – discharge advice

Information for patients

During your visit to the emergency department, you were advised that you have a soft tissue injury to the shoulder. This leaflet answers frequently asked questions about this type of injury.

What is a shoulder soft tissue injury?

It is an injury to the ligaments or other soft tissues around your shoulder.

How long will it take to recover?

This type of injury usually heals without any problems with time and use. Symptoms are usually minor but can take between three and six weeks to subside.

Recovery plan

24-72 hours

Wear the sling for comfort to rest the arm. It might be more comfortable to sleep sitting upright. Make sure you take your arm out of the sling and move the shoulder and arm stopping before it becomes too uncomfortable or painful for you. Please see exercises below and start as pain allows.

Please follow the advice on pain relief given by the clinician you saw in the emergency department. If you need further advice, please ask your local pharmacist or GP.

Zero to two or three weeks since injury

Wear the sling for comfort. You can stop using the sling as you feel able to. Continue with the below exercises.

Three weeks since injury

By now you should be returning to your normal level of activity. You might still feel some discomfort with higher level activities.

If you experience a significant increase in pain and/or swelling, you need to reduce your activity levels and gradually increase it over a longer period.

Exercises to follow

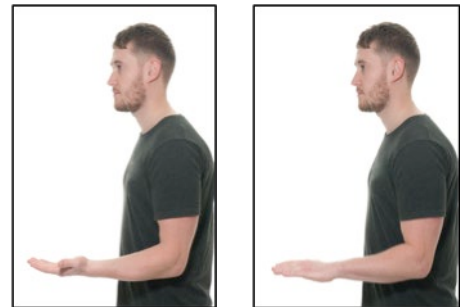
Please note, the number of times you need to carry out each exercise is included as a guide only. If you experience a significant amount of pain while carrying them out, you should reduce the number of times you do each exercise, and gradually increase the amount during your recovery

Repeat these exercises two to three times a day

1. Bend and straighten the elbow



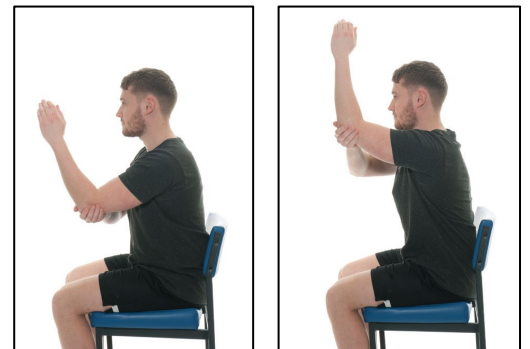
2. Keep your elbow by side and turn the palm of your hand up then down



3. Stand upright with arms relaxed by side. Bring shoulders back and squeeze shoulder blades together.



4. Use your unaffected hand to lift your arm up in front of you as shown in the pictures.



Return to sport

You should be able use the arm in normal day-to-day activities pain-free before you consider returning to sport. If you are unable to do this or need further guidance, please see your GP, and ask for a physiotherapy referral.

Return to driving

You should be able to operate your vehicle and be able to perform a full emergency stop confidently and pain-free before you consider driving again.

What happens next?

We do not routinely follow up patients with this type of injury as it usually heals well. However, if you are still experiencing significant symptoms after six weeks, please contact the virtual fracture clinic at the hospital you first visited.

This clinic is run by a team of physiotherapists and orthopaedic doctors who can review your scans and notes to provide you with the further information or support you may need. If appropriate, they will make an appointment for you to be seen face-to-face in a fracture clinic.

Contact details

Barnet Hospital, Chase Farm Hospital, Finchley Memorial Hospital, Edgware Community Hospital, Cheshunt Community Hospital

- Telephone: 020 8216 4445 (9am to 12pm, Monday to Friday)
- Email: rf-tr.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net

Royal Free Hospital

- Telephone: 020 7472 6222 (9am to 12pm, Monday to Friday, a voicemail message can be left outside of these hours)
- Email: rf-tr.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net

Acknowledgements and references

We would like to thank Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Leeds Teaching Hospitals for allowing us to reproduce part of their leaflets. If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email: rf-tr.royalfreehospitalvfc@nhs.net or rf-tr.barnethospitalvfc@nhs.net.

More information

For more information about the virtual fracture clinic service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website: www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/trauma-and-orthopaedics/.

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet, please email: rf-tr.communications@nhs.net.

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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