

Emergency Department
and Minor Injury Unit

Shoulder Injury

Patient information

You have been given this information leaflet because you have been diagnosed with a shoulder injury.

You will likely have been told you have suffered from a sprain or a muscle injury. A sprain is an injury to a ligament, the band-like structures around joints, which attach bones together and give support to joints. A ligament can be injured, usually by being over-stretched during a sudden pull, but may have occurred during a fall.

Symptoms of a sprain can include:

- pain around the affected joint
- being unable to use the joint normally
- swelling
- bruising
- tenderness



Treating a Shoulder Injury

Minor sprains and strains can usually be treated with self-care techniques, such as PRICE therapy (protection, rest, ice, compression and elevation).

Generally, you should try to start moving a sprained joint as soon as it is not too painful to do so.

For the first 48-72 hours think of:

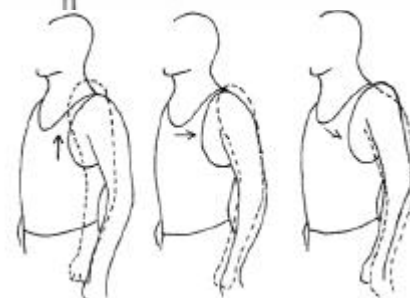
- **PRICE** – Protect, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.
- **Do no HARM** – no Heat, Alcohol, Running or Massage.

The following exercise may help:

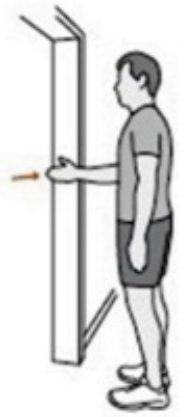
Pendulum exercise – Stand with your good hand resting on a chair. Let your other arm hang down and try to swing it gently backwards and forwards and in a circular motion. Repeat about 5 times, try this 2–3 times a day.



Shoulder stretch – Stand and raise your shoulders. Hold for 5 seconds. Squeeze your shoulder blades back and together and hold for 5 seconds. Pull your shoulder blades downward and hold for 5 seconds. Relax and repeat 10 times.



Door press – Stand in a doorway with your elbow bent at a right angle and the back of your wrist against the door frame. Try to push your arm outwards against the door frame. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10 repetitions.



Recovering from a Shoulder Injury

Your recovery depends on the type of injury you have sustained. You may be referred to a shoulder specialist or physiotherapist, however most minor sprains will improve over a few weeks.

Treating Pain

If needed, painkiller options include the following:

Paracetamol is usually recommended for painful sprains or strains.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling. You can buy some types (eg, ibuprofen) at pharmacies, without a prescription either topically as a cream, or as tablets. You should check the medication advice leaflet to ensure you are safe to take these i.e some patients with asthma or stomach ulcers may not be able to.

If this does not help, you may need an additional stronger painkiller – such as codeine – you should discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

Further Information

For further advice and information about your condition:

Please choose from the following:

- 'NHS Patient Choices' website: www.nhs.uk
- 'Making Lives Better' patient website: www.patient.info
- Telephone NHS 111
- Contact your General Practitioner

Contact details:

- The James Cook University Hospital: 01642 850850
Marton Road, Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW
 - The Friarage: 01609 779911
Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL6 1JG
- Redcar Primary Care Hospital: 01642 511000
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