

Anterior shoulder dislocation

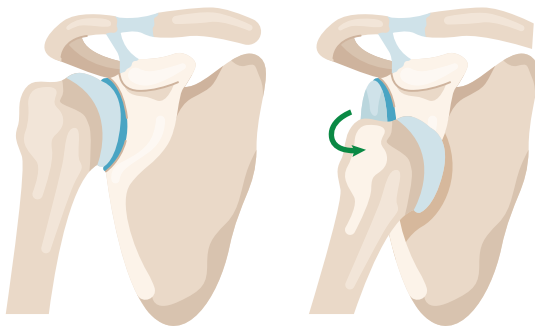
Information and exercise sheet



What is a shoulder dislocation?

The shoulder is the most common joint to dislocate and occurs when the arm bone moves from its socket. Anterior shoulder dislocations (in the forward-direction) are the most common type.

Shoulder dislocations can happen when a strong force moves the arm bone out of its position in the joint, or when the arm is placed in 'at risk' positions in people who have lax or loose shoulders. A dislocation will usually need to be 'put back in' and this is called a relocation. This is done by an emergency department clinician.



Normal anatomy

Anterior dislocation

What to expect

Once a shoulder dislocation has been reduced, the shoulder may feel painful and stiff. You may feel nervous about moving your arm. A sling will be provided to help protect the shoulder in a safe position. Most people find shoulder pain settles quickly and shoulder movement returns to normal after a period of time.

You will need to attend a follow-up with a healthcare professional to assess the progress of your injury. Most people who suffer a shoulder dislocation do not require surgery. After a dislocation, there is an increased risk of the shoulder dislocating again. You may be referred to physiotherapy or orthopaedics depending on your case.

What can you do to help your recovery?

You should wear your sling for _____ week/s. Your arm should be comfortable and relaxed in the sling. Keep your shoulders level.

- Sling on always, only remove for personal cares.
- Sling on always, only remove for exercises and personal cares.
- Sling for comfort and protection, wean out of the sling as soon as you are able.
- Other _____

Rest: wear your sling for as long as you have been advised. Avoid activity that increases pain or movements that caused the dislocation.

Ice: to help manage pain and swelling, use a cold pack wrapped in a tea towel or paper towel for 15–20 minutes every 3 hours as needed. Remove your ice pack if it becomes too cold or painful.

✗ AVOID H.A.R.M

To help with your recovery avoid 'HARM' for the **first 7 days**.

- **Heat:** increases blood flow and swelling to the shoulder.
- **Alcohol:** increases blood flow and swelling. You may also be more likely to reinjure the shoulder.
- **Re-Injury:** protect your shoulder until it heals adequately. Avoid sports until advised by a health professional.
- **Massage:** can slow the healing if it is started too early.

Pain management

Pain relieving medicine may also be recommended in the early phases of recovery. Ask your health professional for further advice.

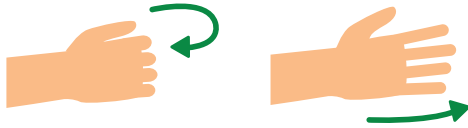


Exercises

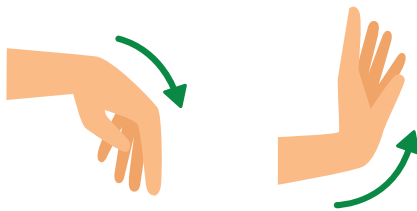
Start these exercises straight away. Repeat each movement **10 times**, do the whole exercise program **4 to 5 times** a day.

Hand/wrist exercises:

- Open and close your hand, squeeze for 3 seconds and relax.



- Move your wrist up and down.



Elbow:

- Bending/straightening

While sitting, with the injured arm by your side and the palm facing you, use your other hand to help bend/straighten your elbow. **Repeat 10 times, 3 times a day.**



Shoulder–Pendulums:

Use a table or bench to lean on for support. Lean forward, let your injured arm hang. Move your body gently to create movement in your injured shoulder – forwards, backwards and small circles. Repeat 10 times in each direction.



When do I need to return to the Emergency Department?

If you develop pins and needles or numbness in the arm or hand, can't move your hand, wrist or elbow, notice swelling or colour change in the arm or hand, have severe ongoing pain, or another dislocation, return to the Emergency Department.

Follow up

It is important to attend recommended follow up appointments to guide your healing and recovery.

These appointments may include:

- General Practitioner (GP or doctor)
- Orthopaedic or fracture clinic
- Outpatient hospital physiotherapy
- Private practice physiotherapist.

Seeking help

Please see a health care professional or attend your nearest emergency department if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- neurovascular concerns - constant tingling and numbness, changes of colour to the arm, worsening and unmanageable pain
- signs of infection - redness, heat, swollen, fevers, unwell.

For other general medical problems see your local doctor or healthcare professional. **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** provides health information, referral and triage services to the public in all parts of Queensland. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call. In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).