



Shoulder dislocation

You came to the emergency department with a dislocated shoulder. It has been put back into place and checked. This sheet explains how to care for your shoulder while it heals, and when to come back.

What is it?

The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint. A fall or a strong pull can push the ball out of the socket. This is a dislocation. After it is put back, the tissues around the joint are stretched and need time to heal. The shoulder may be sore and bruised for a few weeks, and it can come out again, especially in younger people.

Looking after yourself at home

- Wear your sling as advised, usually for comfort for the first 1 to 2 weeks. Take it off to wash and do exercises.
- Hold a cold pack wrapped in a cloth on the shoulder for 15 to 20 minutes, several times a day, for the first 2 days.
- Move your fingers, wrist and elbow several times a day to stop them getting stiff.
- Avoid lifting your arm above your head, or out to the side and backwards, until your doctor says it is safe.
- Do not lift heavy things or play sport until you have been reviewed.

Medicines

- For pain, you may take paracetamol unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen may also help, unless you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some types of asthma, or are pregnant.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor, health centre or the clinic you were referred to within 1 week.
- Ask about physiotherapy. Exercises help make the shoulder strong and lower the chance of it coming out again.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- The shoulder comes out of place again, or looks out of shape
- Numbness, tingling or weakness in the arm or hand
- The hand or fingers turn pale, blue or cold
- Pain that is getting worse and not eased by pain relief
- Rapidly increasing swelling or bruising of the arm



Scan to read this sheet on your phone

This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

EM Orbit · Emergency medicine, in one orbit · shoulder-dislocation-en