



Rehabilitation following Shoulder Surgery

Information for patients
Orthopaedic physiotherapy

- ♦ Balloon Arthroplasty
- ♦ Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair
- ♦ Arthroscopic SLAP Repair (Superior Labrum Anterior Posterior Repair)
- ♦ Open/Arthroscopic Anterior Shoulder Stabilisation



AFTER THE OPERATION

- ❖ As part of your anaesthetic, it is normal for your arm to feel heavy and partially numb when you wake up from your general anaesthetic. This can last up to 12-24 hours after your operation.
- ❖ You will have a small light adhesive dressing on your shoulder to cover the wounds and a large gauze pad to soak up any leaking fluid from your wounds which may last for 24-28 hours.
- ❖ The Surgeon may have applied a sling on your arm in theatre, if not, this will be applied before you go home, if required.
- ❖ You may feel some discomfort. If so, the nursing staff will give you some pain relief on request and you will also be given some home with you.

WHAT DO I DO WITH THE SLING, SUPPORTS?

- ❖ Sling with body strap must be worn for
- ❖ Body strap to be removed by day
- ❖ Sling without body strap must be worn for
- ❖ Following surgery your arm will be supported in a sling for protection and comfort. Not all patients will have a sling with a body belt. It is important that you maintain a good, upright posture and keep your neck mobile whilst your arm is in a sling. If you have had a tissue repair as part of the procedure then you should expect to use the sling for around 4 weeks.
- ❖ Avoid lying on your operated side. For comfort while wearing the sling, you can put a pillow under your shoulder/upper arm and lie tilted over towards your other side. Some people find it easier to sleep propped up.

- ❖ For shirts/jackets remember - **bad arm in first (operated), good arm out first (unoperated)**. Slip the garment over your operated arm and pull it up over the arm with your good hand. To start with some people find it easier to cut up the side of an old T shirt and wear that.



WHEN CAN I GO HOME?

- ❖ You can usually go home later the same day providing you are comfortable. Occasionally and for medical reasons, you may be asked to stay overnight in the hospital.
- ❖ Please arrange an adult to escort you home and care for you for the first 24 hours after your operation.
- ❖ You will get an appointment to see the Physiotherapist at an outpatient clinic; this may have been arranged before your operation.
- ❖ You will also be given an appointment to come back to the Orthopaedic Outpatient Clinic for a review.
- ❖ Before you are discharged your nurse will give you advice on wound care and stitches removal if required. The bulky dressing over your wound must remain in place for 24-48 hours, and then you can remove it. If it becomes damp and soaked with excess fluid, you can change this with a dry pad, without disturbing the small adhesive dressing beneath it. Nursing staff will give you some pads before you leave the ward.
- ❖ A letter will be given to you on discharge to be handed over to the District/Practice Nurse.

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I GET HOME?

- ❖ You must keep your wounds and adhesive dressings clean and dry.

At home you should keep your wound dry for the first 10 days. You can wash your shoulder normally after this time, making sure you dry the area well. Care must be taken when carrying out personal hygiene especially under your armpit. With your arm supported in or as if in the sling, allow your arm to move slightly away from your body to let you clean your armpit – make sure you are careful to dry the area well.

- ❖ The stitches or adhesive tapes (Steri Strips) on the wounds will need removing 10-14 days following your operation. If your orthopaedic outpatient appointment is more than 14 days following your operation please arrange for your District/ Practice Nurse to remove them at 10 days.
- ❖ Ice packs or frozen peas put over the shoulder for 20 minutes at a time is good for pain control and swelling, but don't use ice until the feeling in your arm has come back. Also make sure the bags are waterproof and the skin is protected by wrapping the bags in a clean cloth to prevent a freezer burn!
- ❖ A little redness is normal, and the skin preparation used before surgery has a pink/red colour as well.
- ❖ Watch out for any signs of infection such as:
 - A hot, red area which has spread around the wound
 - An unpleasant smell or mucky discharge (pus).
 - Increasing pain.
 - You experience rapidly deteriorating movements (only applies for those patients who have been instructed to move their shoulder with specific exercises – this will not apply to everyone).
 - An unexplained temperature/fever.

If concerned about any of the above and/or the adhesive dressing needs changed, you should attend the Emergency Department (ED) to be reviewed by the Orthopaedic on call team.

The following exercises will help you avoid excessive stiffness developing whilst you heal and recover following your surgery. You should do these exercises even if you are using a sling.

EXERCISES

We recommend you take pain relief around 30 minutes before exercising your arm and shoulder if you need it. Complete your exercises in a position you feel comfortable (sitting, standing). Breathe out and release during all exercises. If you are tense, this can sometimes make the exercises more painful. Remember to stop any exercises that make your symptoms worse.

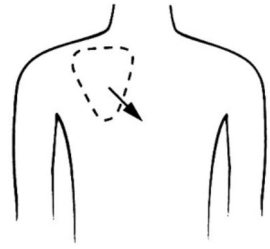
1. Wrist/hand movements: Be sure to move your fingers inwards (make a fist) and outwards (open hand) in a squeezing-releasing pump action and be sure to move your wrist in all directions. Repeat 15 times.



2. Elbow movements: Gently remove your arm from the sling, allow your elbow to straighten fully (hand to hip) then bend your elbow and take your hand to your mouth (if required use your other arm for assistance). Gently place your operated upper limb back into sling if finished exercising. Repeat 15 times.



3. Shoulder blade movements: While in sling – take a breath in and slowly pull your shoulder blades together and downwards keeping your shoulders level. Repeat 10 times. Good posture can make a big difference to your pain after the operation. Avoid “hitching” your shoulder or holding it in an elevated position. Also try to avoid slumping or standing or sitting with round shoulders.



“Aim to complete these exercises 4 times a day”

ADVICE

- ❖ You should not attempt to drive until you are out of your sling, your pain has subsided and you feel confident in your own ability to drive. You do not need to inform the DVLA unless an issue persists beyond 3 months. You should check with your insurers before returning to drive after surgery, particularly if you intend to return earlier than the recommended period provided by your Surgeon.
- ❖ During your recovery from shoulder surgery, if you have no restrictions to your shoulder movements, be sure to gradually return to activities of daily living pacing yourself appropriately.
- ❖ If you need a sling for 4 weeks or more you should avoid heavy lifting for up to 3 months from the date of your operation (because the soft tissue healing will take that long).
- ❖ You should discuss when you can return to work with your consultant. Jobs involving heavy labouring/ lifting should be avoided until your shoulder is sufficiently strong enough to manage these activities. A light job may be resumed as soon as you feel able after the operation.

- ❖ Returning to your work, driving and sport/leisure activities will all depend on the following:
 - The degree of the damage in your shoulder.
 - The type of complexity of the surgery.
 - The nature of your work and sporting activities you practice.

Therefore, you need to refrain from work until you have been seen in the Orthopaedic Clinic where your Consultant will advise you further.

CONSULTANT INSTRUCTIONS:

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CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any queries once you are home, or if you experience any difficulties in the 24 hours following your procedure, you should contact the Day Surgery Unit (DSU) you attended.

You can contact the DSU's between 8am – 7pm.

- University Hospital Wishaw – 01698 366460
- University Hospital Hairmyres – 01355 585630

If you need advice or assistance outside these times, you should contact:

- NHS 24 – Tel: 111
- Your GP

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