

Acromioclavicular Joint Injury (Grade III or dislocation) Shoulder 3

Fracture Care Team: Shared Care Plan

Trust Switchboard for both sites: 0300 131 4500
Fracture clinic and orthopaedic outpatient appointments:
Eastbourne 0300 131 4788
Conquest 0300 131 4861
Casting Department: Eastbourne 0300 131 5564
Casting Department: Conquest 0300 131 4860

This information leaflet explains the ongoing management of your injury.

You have sustained an injury of your Acromioclavicular joint (ACJ). This is the joint between the top of the shoulder blade (acromion) and the far end of the collar bone (clavicle). This normally takes between 6-12 weeks to heal. The pain can be quite bad for 2 -3 weeks. Please keep the sling on for the first three weeks. However, it is important to keep the shoulder moving to prevent stiffness but not to aggravate it. Follow the guidelines below.

Take pain killers as required. You may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up with pillows. If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan, or have any questions, then please contact the Fracture Care Team on the details provided above for advice.

Picture of injury



If you are experiencing pain or symptoms, other than at the site of the original injury or surrounding area, please get in touch using the telephone number at the top of this letter.

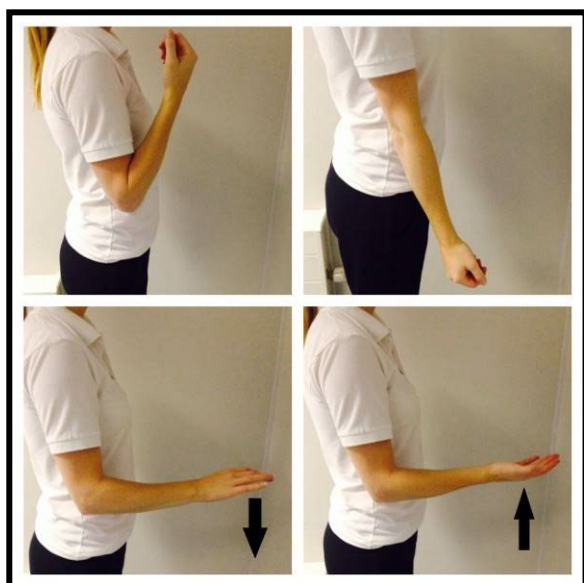
You will have an appointment at the fracture clinic. The Consultant, specialist, Registrar or Practitioner will assess your shoulder and discuss the management and the next stage of your rehabilitation.

Please follow the Management / Rehabilitation plan shown below

Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
0 - 3	Wear the sling except for exercises and personal hygiene. You do not need to wear it at night but it may be more comfortable to do so. Start the Initial exercises. Do not lift your elbow above shoulder height for the first 3 weeks.
3 - 6	Once you have been seen in fracture clinic, you will be advised whether you may start to discard the sling and begin normal light activities with the arm and shoulder. If so, you may also increase movement as shown in the Stage 2 exercises. You should avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks. Start stage 3 exercises once you can do stage 2 exercises with no pain.
6 - 12	The injury should be largely healed and you can resume normal activity but be guided by any pain you are experiencing. You should be able to carry out day to day activities. More arduous tasks may cause discomfort. Begin to lift your arm over-head.
12	If you are still experiencing significant pain and stiffness then please contact us for further consultation

Initial Exercises to do 4 - 5 times a day

If you have stiffness in your elbow or hand from wearing the sling, you may wish to perform these exercises first. However, once they become easy you can start with the posture and pendulum exercises.



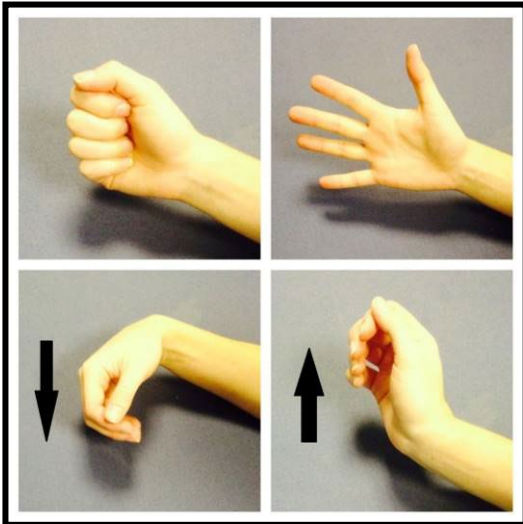
Elbow Bend to Straighten

Bend and straighten your elbow so you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist if necessary. Do not push into pain.

Forearm Rotations

Put your elbow at your side. Bend it to 90 degrees. Slowly rotate your palm up and down until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist if necessary. Do not push into pain.

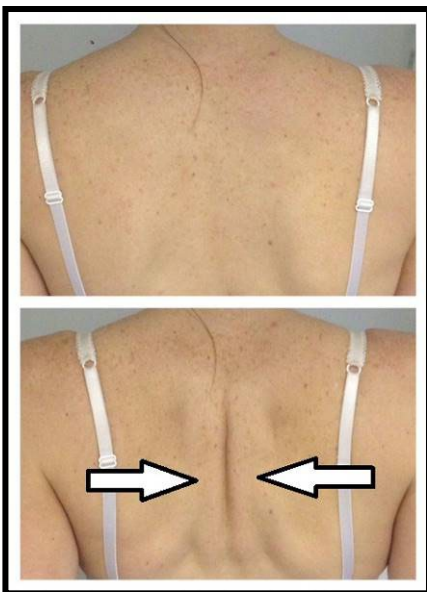
Repeat 10-15 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.



Finger and wrist flexion and extension

Open and close your hand as shown 10-15 times. Then move your wrist up and down 10-15 times.

After a few days, hold a soft ball/ball of socks. Squeeze the ball as hard as possible without pain. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



Postural awareness

Bring your shoulders back and squeeze your shoulder blades together as shown in the picture. Do this with or without your sling on.

Hold the position for 20-30 seconds and repeat 5 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.



Shoulder pendulum exercises

Stand and lean forward supporting yourself with your other hand. Try to relax your injured arm and let it hang down.

1. Assist your arm to move slowly and gently forwards and backwards.
2. Assist your arm to move slowly and gently side to side.
3. Continue for approximately 1-2 minutes in total provided there is no increase in symptoms. Remember to try and relax your arm.

Stage 2 exercises to do 4-5 times a day - To start at 3 weeks after injury



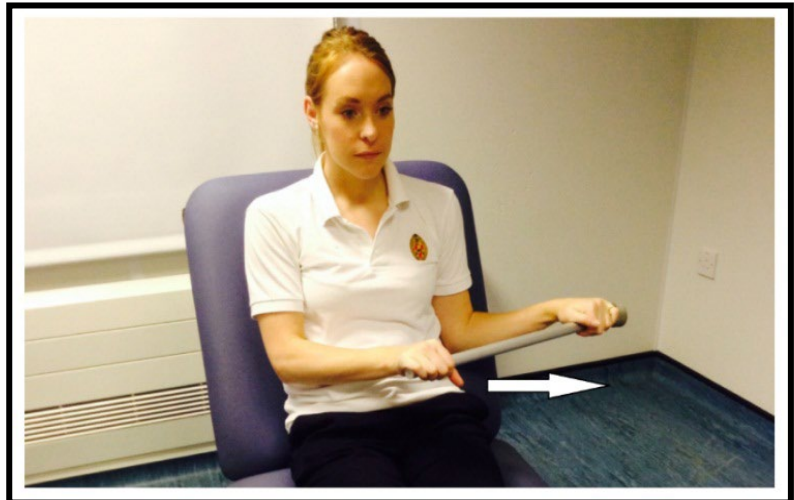
Active assisted Shoulder flexion

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

Repeat 10 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.

Active assisted External rotation

Keep the elbow of your injured arm tucked into your side and your elbow bent. Hold onto a stick/umbrella/golf club or similar. Use your unaffected arm to gently push the hand of your injured arm outwards. Remember to keep your elbow tucked in. Push until you feel a gentle stretch.



If you don't have a stick you could simply hold the injured arm at the wrist and guide it outwards. Hold for 5 seconds then return to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.

Stage 3 exercises to do 4 - 5 times a day - To start at 6 weeks after injury

When you have regained full range of movement during the above exercises without pain you can start to do the exercises without the support of your other hand; this is known as active range of movement. Then when you have regained your full range of movement without the support of the other arm you can start to build up your regular activities.

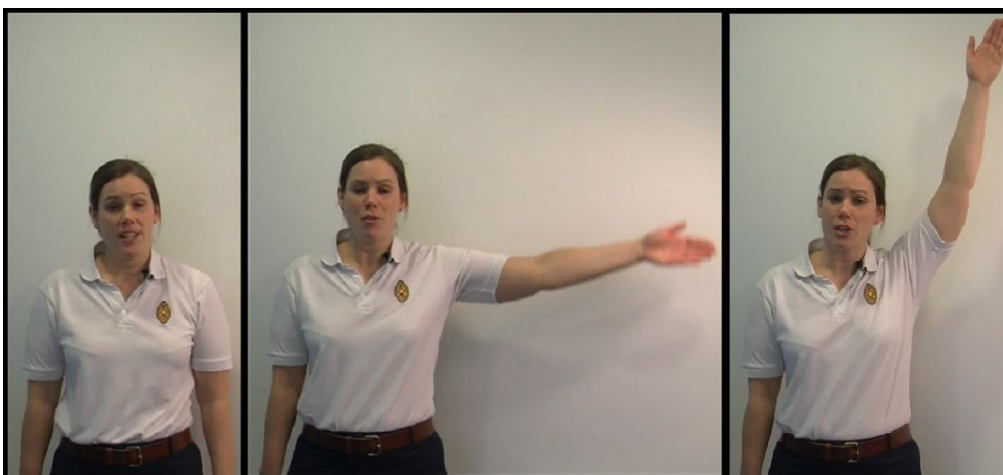
Active Forward flexion:

With your thumb facing up, try to move your arm up, keeping it close beside your body



Active Abduction

With your thumb facing up and outwards, try to move your arm in a big arc out to the side.



Active External rotation

With your elbow by your side, rotate your forearm outwards, keeping your elbow bent to about 90 degrees (a right angle).



Repeat all of these 3 exercises 10 times each, 4-5 times a day. Only go as far as you can naturally, without doing any trick movements to try and get further. This will increase over time and should not be forced.

If you are having problems progressing with the exercises and have a follow-up consultation booked, please do let the clinician know so that they can review the exercises and refer you on to Physiotherapy if necessary. If you are on an independent management programme, then please contact us using the number at the top of the letter so that we can also arrange physiotherapy for you.

Sources of information

This information leaflet has been developed by the Fracture Care Team at Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals Fracture Care Team and adapted for use at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust. Information updated during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that patients with injuries have information, support, and care despite social distancing.

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse, practitioner or doctor.

Reference

Thank you to the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust and to Kate Weatherly, Specialist Orthopaedic Physiotherapist for the first version.

This leaflet can also be found at: www.esht.nhs.uk/leaflet/acromioclavicular-joint-injury-dislocation/

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

- Mr Guy Selmon – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Mr Jamie Buchanan – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Mr Albert Bonnici – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Mr Hemant Thakral – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Helen Harper-Smith – Professional Lead Physiotherapist
- Hilary Kircher – Clinical / Operational Lead Outpatient Physiotherapist

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Department of Trauma and Orthopaedics

Next review date: September 2025
Responsible clinician/author: Helen Harper-Smith Professional Lead Physiotherapist
Prof Scarlett McNally – Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon