

## Scapula Fracture

Shoulder 10

### 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 explains the ongoing management of your injury.

**You have sustained a fracture to your scapula (shoulder blade).** This normally takes between 6-12 weeks to unite (heal). Once the fracture begins to heal it is important to keep the shoulder moving; this stops it becoming stiff. Try not to aggravate it. Use the sling for the first three weeks to allow the soft tissues to settle. Follow the management plan outlined below.

If you have damaged the '**Glenoid**', this is part of the scapula bone and forms the socket of the ball and socket shoulder joint.

Take painkillers 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 for advice.

### Picture of injury



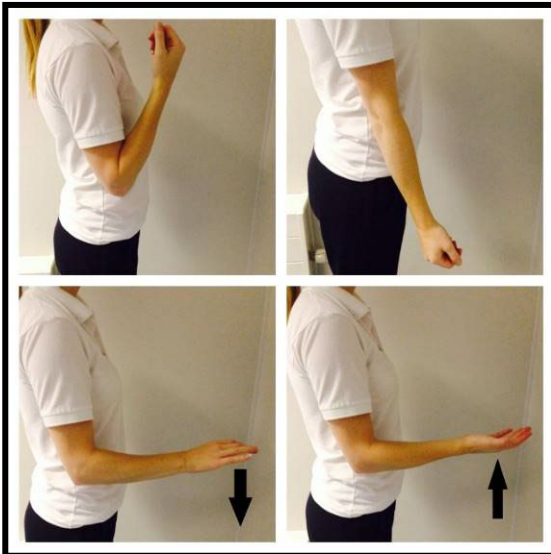
These fractures are usually stable and hardly ever need an operation. Use a sling and follow the guidelines below. You will have an appointment in the fracture clinic. You may have another x-ray at your appointment. The Specialist will assess your shoulder and guide your rehabilitation.

**Please follow the Management / Rehabilitation plan shown below**

Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
0 - 3	Wear the sling all the time even at night in bed. You may remove the sling for washing but do not allow the arm to move. Start initial exercises below.
3 - 12	You will be advised at your fracture clinic when you may discard the sling and return to normal light activities using the arm and shoulder. You will also be advised when you may progress to Stage 2 exercises below. The Specialist may give you further instructions regarding your rehabilitation and when you should be able to carry out more arduous tasks. Start stage 3 exercises once you can do stage 2 exercises with no pain.

## 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.



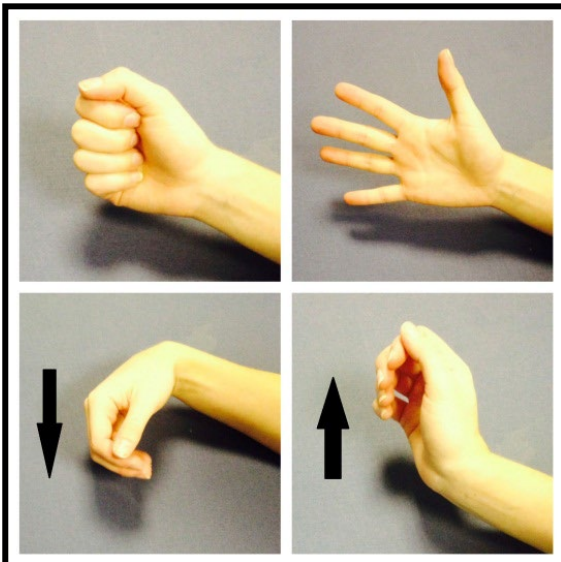
### **Elbow Bend to Straighten**

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.

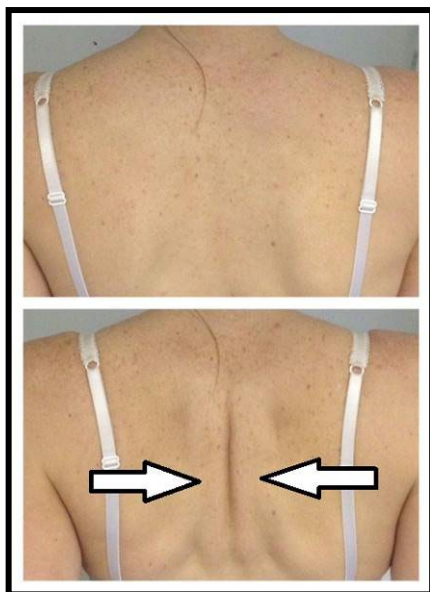
Repeat 10-15 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.



### **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.

## Stage 2 exercises to do 4 - 5 times a day

To start after your fracture clinic appointment unless advised otherwise



### **Shoulder pendular exercises**

Stand and lean forward supporting your injured arm with your other hand as shown in the picture. Try to relax your injured arm.

1. Assist your arm slowly and gently forwards and backwards.
2. Assist your arm slowly and gently side to side.

Continue for approximately 1-2 minutes in total provided there is no increase in symptoms. Remember to try and relax your arm.

## Stage 3 exercises to do 4-5 times a day

To start at 6 weeks after injury unless advised otherwise at fracture clinic



### **Active assisted Shoulder flexion**

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

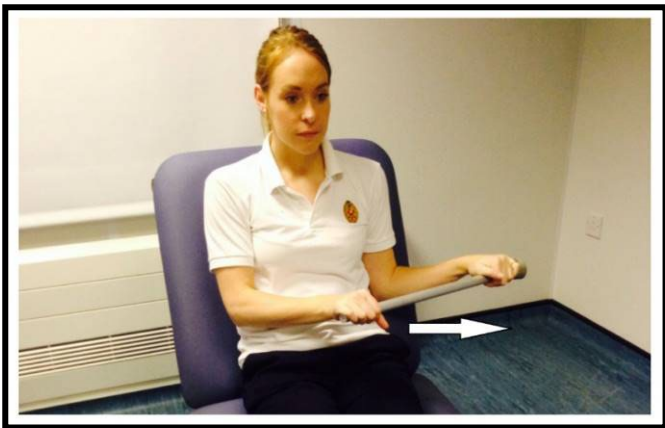
Repeat 10 times, provided there is no increase in symptoms.



### **Active-assisted Abduction:**

Hold a stick in both hands as in the photo. Gently push your injured arm to the side (away from your body) as far as comfort allows. It may help to face a mirror initially to make sure the top of your shoulders stay level.





### **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 push your injured hand outwards. Remember to keep your elbow tucked in. Push until you feel a 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.

When you have regained full range of movement during the above exercises without pain you can start to do the following 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 at about 90 degrees in flexion.

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.

## **Smoking cessation**

Medical evidence suggests that smoking prolongs fracture healing time. In extreme cases it can stop healing altogether. It is important that you consider this information with relation to your recent injury. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury.

For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to the following website: [smokefree.nhs.uk](http://smokefree.nhs.uk) or discuss this with your GP.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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 or doctor.

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## 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/scapula-fracture/](http://www.esht.nhs.uk/leaflet/scapula-fracture/)**

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  
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