

Subacromial Pain / Shoulder Impingement

Information for patients

This booklet provides information for patients with shoulder
impingement

Physiotherapy

Website <http://www.mtw.nhs.uk/physiotherapy/>

 Telephone 01892 632902 / 01622 224308

Email physiotherapy.mtw@nhs.net

What causes impingement?

- This usually occurs due to irritation or inflammation of the bursa (a soft tissue cushion) at the front of the shoulder. Sometimes the tendons (where the muscles attach to the bone) are also affected.
- It is often linked with repeated overhead activities, overuse, and poor habits.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain that comes and goes.
- The pain can be made worse by certain movements including reaching forwards and up, and reaching behind your back.
- Difficulty in sleeping on the affected side due to pain.

How long will it take to recover?

- Healing from soft tissue injuries normally takes about six weeks, though everyone recovers from injuries at different rates.
 - The pain usually starts to settle within a few days.
 - The majority of simple strains do not cause lasting problems, as the body is very good at healing itself.
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What treatments can I use?

Pain Killers

- If your GP has prescribed pain killers, then these should be taken at the recommended dose.

Rest

- Try and rest the arm for the first 24-72 hours. However, it is important to maintain flexibility in the arm so gently move it without causing too much pain. This will ensure your arm does not become too stiff and it will help with the healing.

Ice

- Wrap an ice pack in a damp towel and place over the shoulder. Use for up to 15 minutes every 2 hours. This will help reduce the swelling and pain.

Early Movement and Exercise

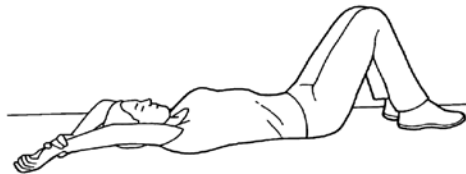
- In the early stages it is best to avoid the activities that aggravate the pain. However, it is important to keep the shoulder moving fully to prevent stiffness.
 - Do not rest for long periods at a time as this will lead to stiffness and weakness and prolong your recovery.
 - Simple, graded exercises can be performed to help gain full function of your shoulder.
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Exercises for your shoulder

1. Stand leaning on a table with your good hand, let your injured arm hang relaxed straight down. Swing your arm in circles, clockwise and anticlockwise.



2. Lying on your back, lift your injured arm up, using your other arm to help.



3. Stand with your arms behind your back. Hold the wrist of your injured arm. Side your hands up your back.



4. Keep your arm close to your side. Slowly turn your forearm outwards.



Please note: these exercises should not increase your pain. Perform each exercise gently and slowly, only moving as far as feels comfortable. Practice each exercise up to 10 times, 2-3 times a day.

What should I do if the pain increases with exercise?

- If your pain increases, initially reduce your activity levels. As your shoulder starts to feel better you can gradually start exercising again.
- However, if your pain increases significantly stop the exercises and consult your GP or physiotherapist before continuing.

General Advice

- Keep your shoulder gently moving, but avoid activities that aggravate your pain.
 - The sooner you commence early exercise, the better your recovery.
 - Don't keep your shoulder still, it will get stiff and healing will take longer.
 - If your symptoms get worse, or do not improve please seek further medical advice
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Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

Further information and advice can be obtained from:

List any appropriate support groups/telephone/web/email addresses.

NHS Direct
NHS Direct online

 0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you would like to raise any concerns, make comments and suggestions or require information on Trust services, you can contact **PALS**. Office opening times are Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm. Both offices offer a 24 hour answering machine. Messages will be responded to within one working day, so please do leave a contact number.

PALS Maidstone Hospital
PALS Tunbridge Wells
PALS Email
PALS SMS
PALS Maidstone Fax
PALS Tunbridge Wells Fax

 01622 224960
 01892 632953
mtwpals@nhs.net
 07747 782317
 01622 224843
 01892 632954

Issue date: Pending Approval
Database reference: GOV/LEA/4

Review date: TBA
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