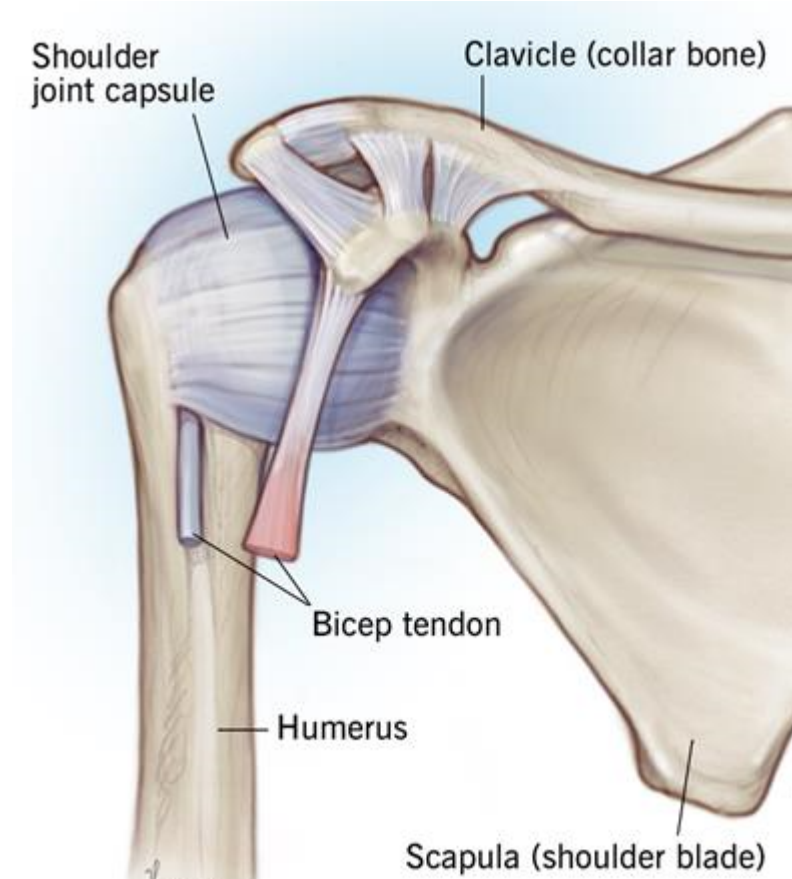


Shoulder pain



The shoulder joint is an unusual joint where the socket of the joint is on sideways. The main ball part of the joint is held into the socket by a group of muscles called the rotator cuff muscles. These can easily get pinched or trapped under the bone on the top of your shoulder called the acromion. If these do trap the muscles then it is called sub-acromial impingement i.e. being “trapped under the top shoulder bone.” The end of each bone is covered with a smooth cover called articular cartilage, which allows the ends of the bones to move against each other almost without friction.

What causes Shoulder pain?

There are many different causes of shoulder pain. It is a very complex joint. One of the most common causes of shoulder pain is sub-acromial impingement of the shoulder. This is where there is inflammation under the acromion which causes pain. If you do various exercises this can often improve the position of the ball in the socket and so stop the irritation. A physiotherapist can help you with these. Another cause is osteoarthritis, a condition that affects the body’s joints. The surfaces within the joint become worn and thin so the joint doesn’t move as smoothly as it should. This then can give you pain. This can happen in two sites. Firstly the actual shoulder joint, but also a small joint on the top of your shoulder called your acromioclavicular joint. Other conditions can refer pain into your neck. It is uncommon to get pain in both shoulders which starts at the same time. If this is the case you should consult a Medical Practitioner.

Medication

There are a number of different tablets and creams available. Painkillers such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen may help which can be brought over the counter in most shops and pharmacies. It is important that you take them as described on the packet regularly and at the recommended dose to help you control the pain whilst allowing you to continue exercising. Don’t wait until your pain is severe before taking painkillers. You shouldn’t take Ibuprofen or Aspirin if you’re pregnant, have asthma, indigestion or an ulcer until you’ve checked with your doctor or pharmacist. Medication can have side effects so you should read the label carefully and check with your pharmacist if you have

any queries. If over-the-counter medication doesn't work, your doctor may prescribe stronger painkillers or cream, which you can rub directly onto the knee.

Physiotherapy

If your knee pain is affecting your activity and is persisting, you can self-refer online to your local physiotherapy department. Physiotherapy can help you to manage pain and improve your strength and mobility.

Treatment for shoulder pain

Exercises and painkillers

Sadly there is no quick fix to arthritis in your shoulder condition. Shoulder surgery is an option but for only a small percentage of the population and should not be considered as the first option. Often shoulder surgery feels like the easiest option but 1 in 10 people statistically are disappointed with the outcome of their surgery. That means that you and 9 friends in one room, all of which had had the operation, one will say they regret having had it done. Therefore it should not be considered as the easiest or best option.

You should not be prescribed opiate medication without serious consideration due. If used long term, the medication gets less effective. It is then very hard to control your pain for any ailment you may experience.

X ray

An X-ray is used to determine the size of the joint space and so how advanced the arthritis is in your shoulder. However it will not show you the rotator cuff or the structures that are potentially inflamed under the acromion. It is normal to have arthritis in your shoulder as you get older. It is the same as developing wrinkles on your face! The arthritis in your shoulder does not specifically give you pain. You do not need an X-ray to confirm this diagnosis. A diagnostic ultrasound can be used to look at the muscles in your shoulder. But again this should only be ordered by a specialist as this often will not change the management of your shoulder.

Steroid Injection

Injections can be a very useful adjunct to treatment of your shoulder pain. This will help to reduce the pain to a degree and settle some of the inflammation in your shoulder. This in turn often helps your mobility and function. There is a risk associated with this but this will be discussed if you decide to go ahead with an injection. However, an injection cannot reverse a tear in the muscles or impingement because the muscles are weak. Therefore they should not be done in isolation.

Surgery

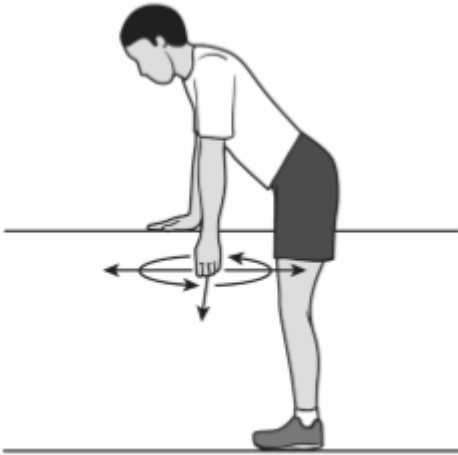
Shoulder surgery in most cases should only be considered if all other options have been tried and not successful. You will be referred through a pathway to see a surgeon. They will ask you to have had a course of physiotherapy, an X-ray and sometimes a joint injection. Shoulder surgery such as a decompression of the sub-acromial space should only be considered if the other options have failed.

Alternative treatment

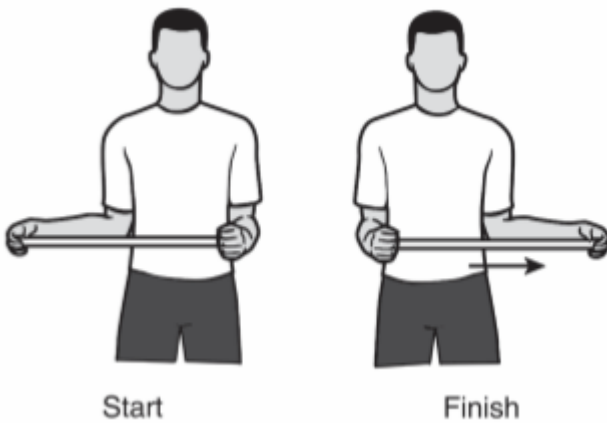
Often treatments like acupuncture, sports massage and exercise classes such as pilates, yoga, zumba and dancing can help your function and pain.

Exercises

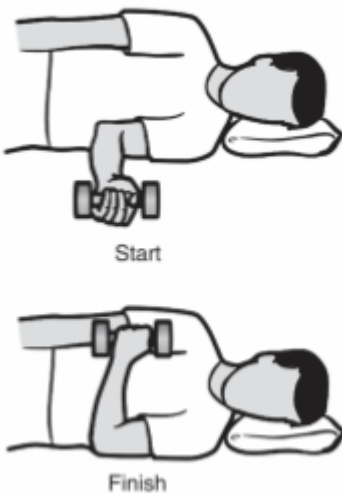
Some simple exercises to help your shoulder pain – all exercises are worth trying.



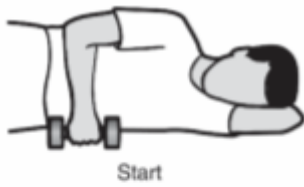
1. Pendular exercises. Lean forward and support your back using your good arm. Let the other arm hang down so it feels heavy in your arm. Gently swing the arm backwards and forwards like a pendulum.



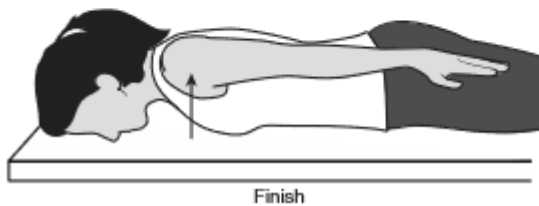
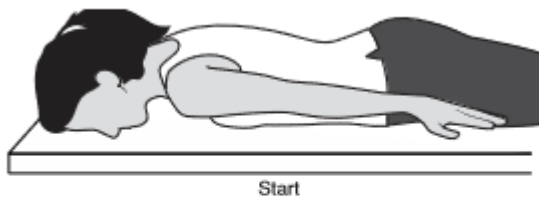
2. Hold onto a stick and gently move your hands from side to side keeping your elbows into your side.



3. Lie on your side and hold a light weight. Practise bringing your arm up across your body slowly and then down.



4. In the same position as 3 lie on your side and gently take the weight from the start position across your body up to the side. Do not worry how far you can move this up.



Lastly lie on your tummy and put a book under your forehead. Then push your fingertips down towards your toes. Hold it, then lift your shoulders and your hands off the bed so you squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold it and then release gently.

Lastly, try to stretch your arm up into the air. The easiest way to do this is using the palm of your hand, hold a small towel on the back of the door. Then gently push upwards taking your hand up the wall as far as you can go.

All these exercises start slowly and repeat each ten times. Over the following weeks gradually increase the repetitions. Use a tin of baked beans as the weight.

Listen to your body, if it irritates the pain then ease back on the number and the range.