

# Pain in the top of your shoulder (acromioclavicular joint)

Department of Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

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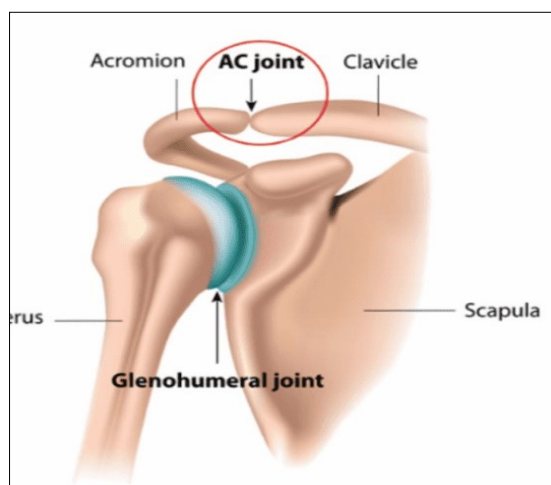
Leaflet number: 1458 Version: 1

## Introduction

You have had a sprain to the joint above **your shoulder** joint. It is called the 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 up to 6 weeks to heal, but may take up to 3 months.



If you have been given a sling use it for up to 3 weeks for your comfort only.

You may use the arm as able but avoid making the pain worse. It is important to keep the shoulder moving to stop it getting stiff.

Take pain killers as prescribed. You may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up with pillows for a while.

Using an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a towel and applied to the shoulder for 10 to 15 minutes can be helpful for pain relief. You can do this up to 4 times a day.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

Follow the management plan outlined below:

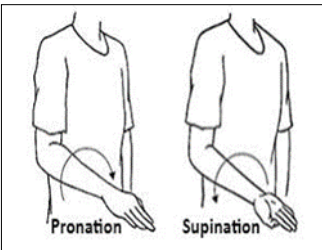
Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
<b>0 to 3 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have been given a sling to wear during the day. This is for your comfort.</li> <li>Remove the sling for exercises and personal hygiene.</li> <li>You do not need to wear the sling at night.</li> <li>You can fully remove the sling when pain has settled.</li> <li>Start the exercises on p3 straight away</li> <li>Do not lift your elbow above shoulder height as this may be uncomfortable.</li> </ul>
<b>3 to 6 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin normal light activities with the arm and shoulder.</li> <li>Start the exercises for weeks 3 to 6 below</li> <li>Avoid heavy lifting for 6 weeks from injury.</li> <li>Start the exercises from 6 weeks onwards when you are able to do so.</li> </ul>
<b>6 to 12 weeks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The injury should now be healed so you can start normal activities and move your shoulder normally</li> <li>Be guided by any pain you are having.</li> <li>You should be able to do day to day activities now.</li> <li>You should be able to do harder tasks now.</li> </ul>
<b>12 weeks onward</b>	<p><b>If you are still having severe pain and stiffness in your shoulder, please contact your GP for an appointment.</b></p>

**Exercises from 0 to 3 weeks.** Do these exercises up to 10 times, 4 to 5 times a day



Bend and straighten your elbow.

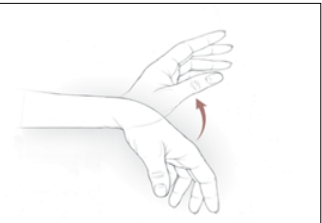
Repeat 10 times



Put your elbow at your side. Bend it to 90 degrees.

Slowly rotate your palm up and down

Repeat 10 times

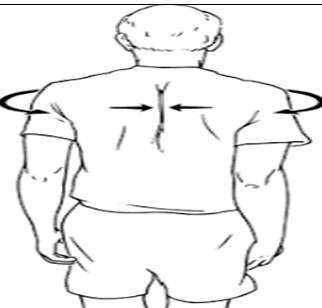
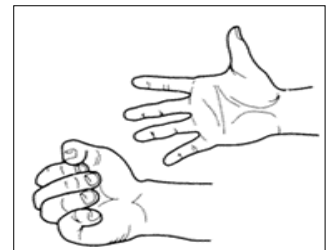


Move your wrist up and down.

Repeat 10 times

Make a fist, then stretch all fingers out.

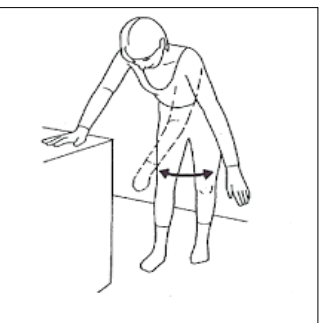
Repeat 10 times



Squeeze shoulder blades together.

Hold 3 to 5 secs and relax

Repeat 10 times

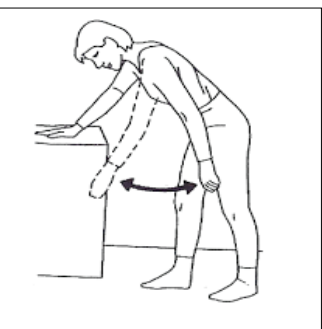


Stand and lean forward supporting your injured arm with your other hand.

Try to relax your injured arm.

Slowly help to move the arm gently forwards and backwards to shoulder height.

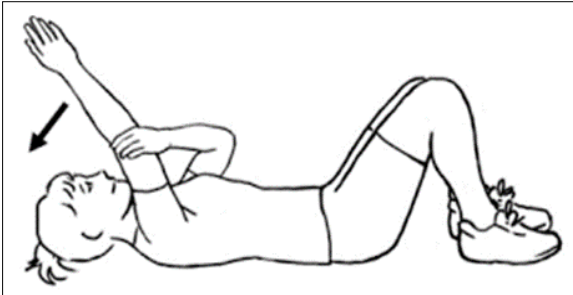
Repeat 10 times



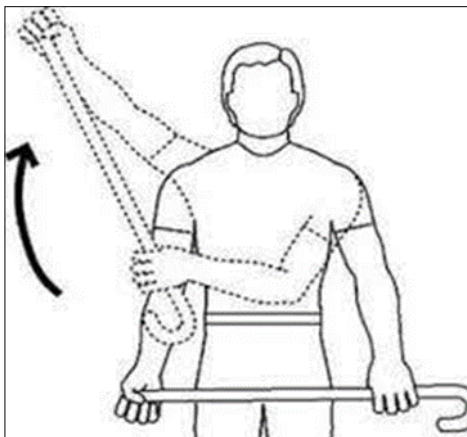
Slowly and gently move the arm from side to side.

Repeat 10 times

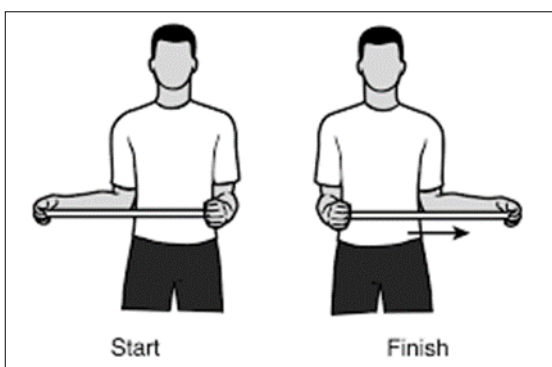
## Exercises from 3 to 6 weeks



Use your other hand to lift your arm up above your head.  
Do not push into pain  
Repeat 10 times



Use a stick or similar.  
With the good arm, push the stick and injured arm  
out to the side.  
Repeat 10 times



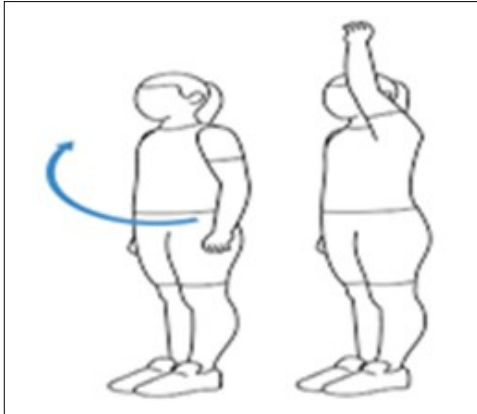
Keep the elbow of your injured arm tucked into your side.  
Keep the elbow bent at 90 degrees.  
Keep upper arm against your trunk and elbow against  
your waist.  
Keep elbow tucked in to the waist.  
Hold onto a stick / broom.  
Use your unaffected arm to push your injured hand  
outwards.  
If you do not have a stick you could simply hold the  
injured arm at the wrist and guide it outwards.  
Repeat 10 times

## Exercises from 6 weeks after injury (or earlier if your pain has settled)

When you have recovered your full shoulder movements using the exercises for weeks 3 to 6, you can start these exercises, as long as you do not start to get pain. Carry on with the exercises for weeks 3 to 6 for longer if you get any pain doing these exercises .

These exercises can be done without the support of your other hand.

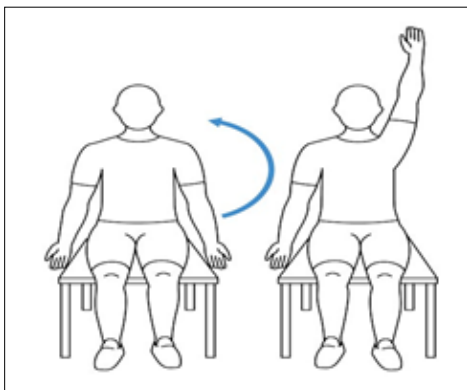
Repeat these exercise 10 times, 4 to 5 times a day.



With your thumb facing up lift the arm forward and up.

Keep the arm close to your body.

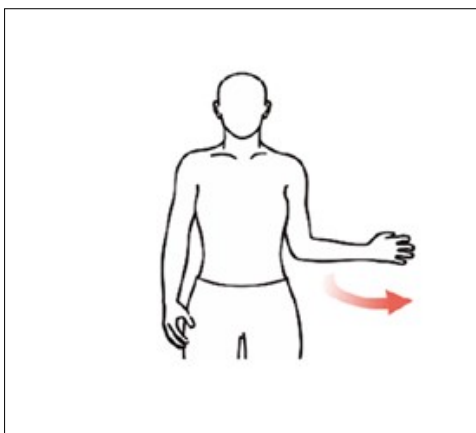
Repeat 10 times



With your thumb facing up.

Move your arm in a big arc out to the side.

Repeat 10 times



With your elbow by your side, rotate your forearm outwards.

Keep your elbow at bent to 90 degrees

Repeat 10 times

## When can I drive?

You can start to drive at 3 weeks if you feel safe to do so and if this does not cause pain in your shoulder.

You are advised to start with short journeys first as a test to see if this causes pain in your shoulder or arm.

## What is the best way to dress?

When you are wearing the sling, wear clothing that is easy to get on, such as a T-shirt pulled over your head or a top that can be buttoned down the front.

After the sling has been removed, it is easier to put your affected arm into the sleeve of your clothing first.

## Contact details

If you are having problems doing the exercises, please contact the Fracture Clinic Team, Leicester Royal Infirmary. Tel: 0116 258 5816

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على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)