

For any further advice please contact the Fracture Clinic on

0151 604 7069

Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm

or contact

A&E

on the main hospital number.

0151 678 5111

Sr. Howard
Fracture Clinic Ext 8557
TRANSFER POINT 700749

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille and on tape.
Please contact Geoff Pennock on 0151 604 7289.



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Wirral University 
Teaching Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Dislocated Shoulder

Patient Advice Leaflet

Fracture Clinic Arrowe Park Hospital



Dislocated Shoulder

The shoulder joint is your body's most mobile joint. It can turn in many directions, but this advantage also makes your shoulder easy to dislocate.

Dislocations cause pain and unsteadiness in the shoulder. Your muscles may have spasms from the disruption, and this can make it hurt more.

When your shoulder dislocates time & time again, you have what is known as shoulder instability.

Symptoms of a Dislocation

- Swelling
- Numbness
- Weakness
- Bruising
- Sometimes dislocation may tear ligaments/ tendons in your shoulder.
- Once in a while nerves may also be damaged.

Your shoulder joint can dislocate forward, backward or downward. A common type of shoulder dislocation is when your shoulder flips forward (Anterior instability)

This means your upper arm bone moved forward and down out of its joint. It may happen when you put your arm in a throwing position.

The doctor in the clinic will examine your shoulder and may order an X-ray. It's important for you to tell your doctor how it happened. Was it an injury? Have you dislocated it before?

By the time you are being seen in the clinic, your dislocation will have been reduced in the A&E department. This is called a closed reduction.

Rest & Rehabilitation

Your doctor may immobilise your shoulder in a sling for several weeks following your dislocation.

You should get plenty of rest and apply ice packs to the affected area 3 – 4 times a day, for 10 minutes at a time. A frozen bag of peas (kept purely for this reason and not to be eaten) makes an excellent compress as it can be moulded around the shoulder.

You must always remember to protect your skin from the ice pack by placing a towel between your skin and the ice pack to avoid any damage to your skin from the cold.

Advice will be given on how to dress yourself without causing too much movement in your shoulder.

After the pain and swelling has subsided, your doctor will arrange some rehabilitation exercise for you. These will help to restore your shoulder's range of motion and help strengthen your muscles.

Rehabilitation may also help to prevent dislocating your shoulder again in the future. The exercises would begin by doing gentle muscle toning exercises, followed later by exercises using weights.

If shoulder dislocation becomes a chronic condition, a brace can sometimes help. However, if therapy and bracing fail, then surgery may be indicated to help to repair or tighten torn or stretched ligaments, which are needed to hold the joint in place.