

Chia FAQs



Shoulder Dislocation

What is dislocation of the shoulder?

The shoulder is one of the most mobile joints in the body. It is made up of three bones: the humerus (arm bone), the scapula (shoulder blade) and the clavicle (collar bone). The joint made by the humeral head (top of the arm bone) and the glenoid (part of the shoulder blade) is typically referred to as the shoulder joint or the glenohumeral joint. It is considered a ball and socket joint and allows for a large degree of mobility. When the shoulder is dislocated, the ball and socket of the shoulder joint become separated. The shoulder can dislocate forwards, backwards or downwards.

What is subluxation of the shoulder?

A shoulder subluxation is a partial or temporary dislocation of the shoulder joint.

What are the symptoms of a dislocated shoulder?

The symptoms associated with a shoulder dislocation include:

- a 'popping' sensation
- pain
- numbness and tingling in the fingers or a 'dead arm' feeling
- difficulty or inability to move the arm
- deformity or abnormal appearance of the shoulder

How long should you wear a sling after dislocating your shoulder?

There is no benefit of conventional sling immobilisation for longer than one week. Furthermore, external rotation immobilisers are not beneficial to reduce the risk of future shoulder dislocation.

How long does it take to recover from a dislocated shoulder?

It usually takes 2 to 3 weeks to resume normal day to day activities following a shoulder dislocation. Initial treatment consists of rest, ice, immobilisation in a sling and physiotherapy. Return to sport is allowed once symmetrical strength and range of motion is achieved.

What is the risk of redislocation?

Redislocation risk is dependent on age and activity level. Recurrence rates as high as 90% have been reported in young athletes involved in contact sports, compared with a 10% recurrence rate in those over the age of 40 years. The major risk of dislocation over the age of 40 years is tears of the rotator cuff.

When is surgery needed for a dislocated shoulder?

Patients with repeat dislocation usually require surgery. Other indications for surgery include irreducible dislocations, fractures and rotator cuff tears.


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