

# Shoulder Fracture (Broken Shoulder)

## Information for Patients



**This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about shoulder fractures and what you can do to help with your recovery.**

### What is a shoulder fracture?

Firstly, a fracture is the same as a break. The word fracture is a medical term and a break is more of a common term to describe an injury to a bone that has caused it to break.

There are many different types of fractures; regardless of this, they all essentially mean the same thing i.e. that one or more of the bones in your shoulder have been broken.

### What are the common symptoms?

**Pain:** Shoulder fractures can potentially be really quite sore. It is very normal for your shoulder, upper arm or even down to your wrist to be sore after a fracture and it is just as normal for that soreness to still be there for some time afterwards (weeks possibly into months).

**Swelling:** After a shoulder fracture, it is very likely for you to notice swelling. You may find the swelling lasts for a long time (possibly into months) and may even still be there when the pain has settled and you are feeling better. This doesn't necessarily mean anything is wrong, it is just what seems to happen.

**Limited movement:** Whilst your shoulder is sore and swollen, you can expect to find that movement will be difficult. If you are in a sling, you will find your shoulder difficult to move. You may also find your elbow, wrist and neck equally stiff and uncomfortable. Again, this is normal and actually will help the early stages of your healing. Once you are ready or have been told to by the hospital or your physio, it is important to get your shoulder moving as soon as you feel that you can, as this will make sure your recovery is started nice and early.

### When will my shoulder be healed?

Fractures typically heal within about 6-8 weeks. There are things that might influence this including any pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes or if you smoke, but typically once you pass the 6-8 weeks' timescale, you can consider your shoulder healed.

### What can I do to help myself?

**Trust it:** After a shoulder fracture, you might not feel confident to use it or may feel that it will let you down or that you might injure it again. This is extremely normal and might take a little while to

improve. It is hoped that the information on this page will help you understand what is normal after a shoulder fracture and help you to start to trust your shoulder again.

**Start using it:** Your arm is designed to be used, therefore it is important to try and get it going as soon as you can (in some cases this has to be once the hospital has said they are happy for you to do so). It is likely to be sore but you will not make it worse by using it, in fact it will help your arm start to get better more effectively. You may need to adjust how you use your arm or how long you do things for in the first stages, but it is something that improves over time for most people.

### Will it get better?

For most people, a shoulder fracture will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. It is difficult to predict how long or how smooth or how full your recovery might be, but by understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about shoulder fractures or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

**Search online:** [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'shoulder fractures'

# Exercises



## If in a sling:

Using your other arm, lift the arm that is in the sling up towards the ceiling. The arm in the sling should only be doing a little bit of the work for this exercise and most of the effort should come from the other arm.

Complete little and often over the day.



Relax your arm as best as you can and lean your top half forwards. Make sure your arm does no work to get into this position.

Complete little and often over the day.

## If not in a sling:

Hold onto a sturdy support like a table or the back of a chair. Lean forwards slightly. Keep the arm you want to exercise 'floppy' and gently swing it forwards and backwards or side to side. You should not have to use much/any effort to move your arm.

Complete little and often over the day.



Sitting near a table in front of you with a roller or large bottle under your hand. Lean your top half towards the table and allow your arm to move with/over the roller or bottle. Make sure the arm that is being pushed out does little or no work.

Complete little and often over the day.





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