

Shoulder Replacement Surgery

Information for Patients



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

The following information and advice have been written in line with the physiotherapy and surgical teams at James Paget University Hospital. If you have had your surgery at another hospital or you were given specific instructions that are different to the information below, you should consult your surgeon or physiotherapist before undertaking any of the exercises/advice.

What is a shoulder replacement?

A shoulder replacement is an operation that involves replacing all or part of your shoulder joint with an artificial joint.

What are the common symptoms?

Pain: A shoulder replacement is a big operation and therefore it is normal to experience pain afterwards. The discomfort from your operation could last weeks or months, but again, this doesn't necessarily mean that anything is going wrong, as it is normal and to be expected.

Swelling: A shoulder replacement is a big operation; therefore, it is normal for your shoulder and upper arm to be swollen afterwards. The swelling will often hang around for some time, maybe weeks into months, and may even make its way down into your elbow or hand. However, just because the swelling is still there, doesn't mean there's a problem, it is quite normal and to be expected.

Limited movement of the shoulder: It is very normal to have limited movement immediately after having your shoulder replaced. Over time, and with rehabilitation, you will hopefully find that your shoulder movement improves. It is uncommon to regain all of the movement of your shoulder after having joint replacement surgery.

Do I have to wear my sling all the time?

For the first 4 weeks, you should wear your sling all the time, including at night to give your shoulder the best chance to recover. The only times you should take your sling off are to exercise, dress or wash.

Am I allowed to use my shoulder?

Yes, but for the first two weeks you should use your other arm to help your operated shoulder when exercising. You can move the elbow, wrist and hand on your operated side as much and as freely as you like straight away.

Is there anything I shouldn't do with my new shoulder?

For the first 6 weeks after your surgery, it is important you try to avoid the following movements if you can help it. The movements we advise you don't attempt are:

- Taking your arm up and out at the same time
- Taking your hand behind your head
- Taking your arm all the way behind you
- Taking your hand behind your back
- Taking weight through your arm such as pushing yourself up in bed or out of a chair

What can I do to help myself?

Be kind to yourself: You have just had a major joint operation which is the largest thing you can ask your shoulder to undergo. Your body is amazing and can sort most issues out by itself, but the pain and difficulties can make you feel vulnerable, drained and sometimes a bit lost. Adapting and adjusting things that are sore, being patient with yourself and your shoulder and gently working on getting it moving will all contribute to helping your operation become a success.

Get your shoulder moving: Moving your shoulder as much as is comfortable is essential for getting a good result from your operation. After taking things gently for the first two to six weeks as outlined above, you should look to move your shoulder as far and as often as you can comfortably.

Will it get better?

For most people, a shoulder replacement may not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. 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 replacements or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

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

Exercises



In your sling, 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 throughout the day.



In your sling, using your other arm lift the arm that is in the sling up towards the ceiling **ONLY** to shoulder height. 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 throughout the day.



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