



Royal Free London
NHS Foundation Trust

After your shoulder arthroscopy and/or subacromial decompression surgery

Information for patients

The aim of your operation is to help relieve pain in your shoulder and restore as much movement and function as possible. Your doctor will have discussed this with you prior to your operation.

This booklet provides information to assist you when you go home, including exercises to increase the range of movement in your shoulder.

It has been produced to help you gain maximum benefit from your operation, but is not a substitute for professional medical care and should be used together with advice from staff at the Royal Free London.

Following your operation

You will not routinely be seen by a physiotherapist after the operation unless specifically requested by your surgeon.

You may be given a sling for going home. You should only wear this for a day or two for comfort, including at night time, unless you have been instructed otherwise by your surgeon.

Check for possible pressure areas (for example soreness or redness) while the sling is in place. If you discover a pressure area, re-adjust your sling. If you experience little or no relief, you may remove the sling entirely.



Resting positions

Try to keep your operated arm in a comfortable position, eg resting it on a cushion or pillow when sitting. However, it is important that you regularly bend and straighten your elbow and move your fingers/hands to minimise swelling and stiffness, as shown in the exercises in this booklet.

Post-operative pain

A prescription for pain medication will be given to you before you leave hospital. It is important that you follow the instructions given for dosage and timing. The pain should settle gradually over the following weeks. It is important to note that your body's natural healing processes take place over approximately three months, so it is not unusual to experience some pain during this time.

Pain levels vary between individuals. If you are experiencing a lot of pain you should discuss this with your GP.

The wounds

You will normally have two or three small stitches following the surgery. The stitches will be removed 10 to 14 days after your operation either at your clinic review, or at your GP surgery.

Follow-up appointments

You may be referred for out-patient physiotherapy when you leave hospital if requested by your surgeon. This will usually take place within ten days of your surgery.

Follow-up in the clinic

At this appointment you will be seen by a member of the shoulder specialist clinical team. This is usually arranged for two to six weeks after your surgery.

Post-operative progress

This operation is carried out to relieve pain in the shoulder. This will gradually take place over six months. Remember, every patient is different and will progress at their own rate. Do not become concerned if you are progressing differently to the guidelines.

Exercises

It is important that you complete your exercises when you go home so that you maintain mobility in your shoulder, neck and elbow.

We recommend that you be guided by the pain in the first six weeks. It is normal to experience some degree of discomfort when doing your exercises. If you are experiencing a lot of pain, lower the intensity at which you are completing the exercises.

Repeat these exercises three to four times per day.

1. Sit or stand. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a stretch. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Repeat to the left.



2. Sit or stand. Slowly drop your head to the right, trying to touch your right ear to your right shoulder. Keep your shoulder in a relaxed position, avoid raising it. Repeat to the left.



3. Sit or stand. Raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Release. Repeat two or three times.



4. Sit or stand. Bend and straighten your elbow.



5. Make a fist, then fully straighten out your fingers.



6. Exercise your operated arm by placing your hand on a towel on a table and slide your arm forwards and backwards. Repeat 5-10 times.



7. Exercise your operated arm by placing your hand on a towel on a table and slide your arm outwards and inwards. Repeat 5-10 times.



8. Exercise your operated arm by gently swinging it forwards and backwards like a pendulum for 30 seconds.



Driving

Do not drive while your arm is still in a sling. You can start driving as soon as you feel able, usually within a week or two. Please speak to your surgeon for further guidance. We also recommend you speak to your motor insurance company as terms will vary.

Return to work

This will depend on the type of work that you do and the extent of your surgery. If you have a desk based job, you may be able to return within a week. If your job involves heavy lifting or repetitive overhead movements, you may require a longer period of rehabilitation. Please discuss this with your employer and your consultant.

Leisure activities

Start with short, gentle sessions, gradually increasing the length of the sessions and the effort used.

Washing and dressing

Your wound dressing is water resistant; however, you should avoid soaking the wound before the stitches are removed. Avoid using spray deodorants, talcum powder or perfumes near the wound. Always dress your operated arm first and undress it last.

For further information, please contact therapy services:

- **Barnet Hospital**
Wellhouse Lane, Barnet, EN5 3DJ
Phone: 020 8216 4805
- **Chase Farm Hospital**
The Ridgeway, Enfield, EN2 8JL
Phone: 020 8375 1679
- **Royal Free Hospital**
Pond Street, Hampstead, NW3 2QG
Phone: 020 7830 2127

More information

For more information about the physiotherapy and orthopaedic services at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:

- www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/therapy-services/physiotherapy
- www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/trauma-and-orthopaedics

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email:

rf.communications@nhs.net

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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Service: Therapy services – physiotherapy

Version number: 1

Approval date: August 2019

Review date: August 2021

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