

Self Help for Shoulder Impingement

Information for patients

What is a Shoulder Impingement?

Shoulder impingement is an umbrella term used to describe the compression or irritation of the rotator cuff tendons (tissue that attaches the muscle to the bone) underneath the bone or ligaments inside your shoulder. Other names are used to describe this problem, including sub acromial or sub deltoid bursitis, tendinopathy, subacromial pain syndrome and rotator cuff related pain.

Contributing factors

- Poor posture
- Overuse, especially lifting above head or overhead decorating
- Heavy gym work, especially chest focused
- An unusual increase or change in your activity

When to seek medical attention

- A new lump or bump around the shoulder
- Bruising or redness in and around the joint or new multiple joint swellings
- Feeling unwell with a temperature associated with the onset of this problem
- Loss of feeling and power in the arm
- Power loss associated with trauma or a fall onto an outstretched hand
- Unusual increase in breathlessness, or new persistent cough since the onset of this problem

Symptoms

Symptoms can vary in intensity; there may be intermittent 'catching' or 'aching' pain in the front of the shoulder, which can radiate into the arm. Symptoms are usually aggravated by activities such as lifting, overhead activities, dressing or reaching for a seat belt.

What to expect

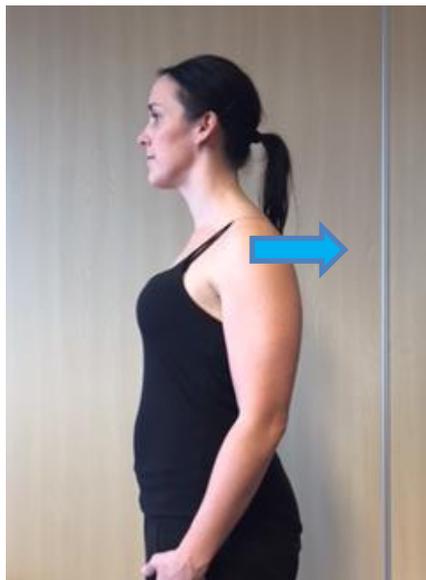
The majority of shoulder impingement related pain will settle within a few weeks or months with the correct activity modification. If your shoulder condition is persistent then the first line of treatment is physiotherapy, where you will be assessed and given specific instructions and exercises to help your condition. A very small number of people may require more invasive treatment such as a steroid injection or surgery if their symptoms do not respond to the other treatments.

Management

- Avoid aggravating the symptoms, especially with overhead activities or lifting
- Ensure you do not allow your shoulder to stiffen, gentle movement is helpful
- Adequately control your pain, pain stops the muscles working properly and can make this condition last longer. Speak to a pharmacist if you are unsure which medication may help
- You could apply heat or ice to help with the pain and healing, ensure that you do not apply directly to the skin, do not use too frequently or for prolonged periods of time (up to 20 minutes), as these treatments can burn the skin
- Try to maintain a good posture

Exercises

Demonstration	Instructions
	<p>Stand or sit with good posture of upper back and neck, gently draw your shoulder blades backwards. Adopt the position demonstrated in the photograph, with your elbow bent on the affected arm.</p> <p>Use your hand for the unaffected side to gently resist yourself attempting to rotate your arm outwards, while keeping elbow in by side.</p> <p>Hold for five seconds up to 10-15 times, two to three times a day as tolerated.</p>
	<p>Stand with one leg in front of the other, hold onto a stable surface.</p> <p>Allow your affected arm to hang down, trying to relax all of your muscles. When your affected arm feels relaxed, gently use your body to initiate circular motion of your affected arm.</p> <p>Ensure the movement is a subtle one and does not cause pain.</p> <p>Repeat for 30 seconds up to four times, twice daily as tolerated.</p>



Stand tall, ensuring good posture of upper back and neck, maintain relaxed breathing. Draw your shoulder blades backwards and hold for 15 seconds. Repeat five times, two to three times a day as tolerated.

Start in the same position as above, but this time aim to roll your shoulder blades backwards in a circular motion. Repeat 10 times, two to three times a day as tolerated.

Frequently asked questions

When can I return to sport?

You may return to sport when you can perform the range of movements and strength required for your sport.

What can I do if my shoulder does not settle?

If your symptoms have not settled after four to six weeks, you should consider referring yourself to your local physiotherapy department. Physiotherapy self-referral forms are available at your GP reception. Complete the form and return to the reception desk. You will either receive a telephone call or a letter for you to arrange an appointment with the physiotherapist.

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

Reviewed by Readers' Panel September 2018



Printed September 2018 Review September 2020 Ref: CCICP/PHYSIO/0180918