

# Self Help for Osteoarthritis (OA) Shoulder

## Information for patients

### What is OA shoulder?

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a common condition which can affect any joint. As part of normal life, your joints are exposed to a constant level of stress, which causes some wear and tear on the joint. In most cases, your body repairs this itself and you do not experience any symptoms but in osteoarthritis, this process becomes painful and can cause swelling and stiffness in the joint. Bony growths can develop, and the area can become inflamed (red and swollen). OA can occur at the end of the collar bone or inside the shoulder joint itself.

### Contributing factors

- Overuse or repeated movements of the shoulder
- Previous injury or surgery in the shoulder
- Age (By the age of 65, at least half of people will have some OA in some joint)

### When to seek medical attention

- A new lump or bump around the neck and 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
- Sudden onset of pain after injury

### Symptoms

The symptoms of osteoarthritis can vary. Commonly people complain of pain around the shoulder that can radiate down the arm. Often the pain may feel worse towards the end of the day or night. Stiffness can also be a symptom of osteoarthritis; this usually improves with activity, although you may notice an overall reduction in your movement. Further symptoms can include sensations of clicking or grinding in the shoulder joint. This is not usually harmful and should not cause concern unless associated with pain or change in appearance of your shoulder.

### What to expect

In most cases the symptoms of shoulder osteoarthritis come and go, in some cases they can worsen with time. 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 small number of people may require more invasive treatment such as an injection or surgery symptoms do not respond to the other treatments.

### Management

- Exercise, as it is very important to keep your joints moving. You will need to find the right balance between rest and exercise
- Pace your activities
- If you are involved in an activity using repetitive movements, such as a keyboard or mouse work, or if your profession requires repetitive manual handling activities, have a look at your workstation and work activities and consider how you could adjust these to avoid undue stress on your wrist and forearm. You may need to talk to your employer
- Adequately control your pain. Pain stops the muscles working properly and can make this condition last longer. Speak to your 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 as these treatments can burn you
- Try to maintain a good posture

## Exercises

Demonstration	Instructions
<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Start position</p>  <p>End position</p> </div>	<p>Stand facing the back of a chair or work surface. Place your hands on the secure object and slowly walk backwards to feel the shoulders move; this should be a gentle stretch as tolerated.</p> <p>Hold this position for five seconds and return to start position. Repeat 10 times, two to three times a day as tolerated.</p>



Stand with one leg in front of the other, hold onto a stable surface.

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 a circular motion of your arm.

Ensure the movement is a subtle one and does not cause pain.

Repeat for 30 seconds up to four times, twice daily as tolerated.



Sit or stand with good posture. Bend your affected elbow and tuck into your side. Use a walking stick or a similar object to help push your arm in an outwards direction as shown in the photograph.

Go as far as you feel comfortable and ensure your body remains straight and your elbow is by your side.

Hold for five seconds. Repeat 10 times, two to three times a day as tolerated.

	<p>Sit or stand with good posture. Maintain an upright position as you gently help your affected arm behind your back as shown in the photograph.</p> <p>Hold this position for five seconds. Repeat 10 times, two to three times a day as tolerated.</p>
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## Frequently asked questions

### 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.

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