

Orthopaedic Department  
York teaching hospital

This is a follow-up letter to your recent telephone consultation with the Fracture Care Team explaining the ongoing management of your injury. Your case has been reviewed by an Orthopaedic Consultant (Bone Specialist) and Fracture Care Physiotherapist.

**You have sustained a minor injury to your Acromioclavicular joint (ACJ) – the small joint formed between your collar bone and shoulder blade.**

**Healing:** This normally takes between 3-6 weeks to heal, but soft tissue injuries can persist for up to 3 months.

**Pain:** Take pain killers as prescribed.  
You may find it more comfortable to sleep propped up with pillows.

**Using your arm:** Use the sling, if provided, for up to 3 weeks and for comfort only.  
It is important to keep the shoulder moving to prevent stiffness but not to aggravate it. Follow the rehabilitation plan on the next page.

**Follow up:** You will see a Shoulder Specialist about 6 weeks after your injury.  
They will assess your shoulder and discuss the injury management and the next stage of your rehabilitation.  
If you have not received this appointment within one week of receipt of this letter please contact the booking hub directly on Tel: .

**Area of injury:**



If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan, or have any questions, then please phone the Fracture Care Team for advice.

**Or** if you are experiencing pain and symptoms anywhere else, other than at the site of the original injury or surrounding area, please also get in touch using the telephone or e-mail details at the top of this letter.

**York Virtual Fracture Clinic Contact details:**

**Phone:** 01904 726575

**Scarborough Trauma Assessment and  
Treatment Unit (TATU):**

**Phone:** 01723 342021 / 07385 463781

**Email:** virtualfractclinic@york.nhs.uk

Please follow the management plan below

What to expect:

Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
0-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wear the sling during the day except for exercises and personal hygiene.</li> <li>✗ You do not need to wear it at night.</li> <li>✓ Start the 'Initial Exercises' below straight away.</li> <li>✗ Do not lift your elbow above shoulder height as this may be painful.</li> </ul>
3-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Try not to use the sling</li> <li>✓ Begin normal light activities with the arm and shoulder.</li> <li>✓ Increase movement as shown in the Stage 2 exercises.</li> <li>✗ Avoid heavy lifting for the full 6 weeks.</li> <li>✓ Appointment at upper limb clinic</li> </ul>
6 -12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The injury should be largely healed.</li> <li>✓ Resume normal activity but be guided by any pain you are experiencing.</li> <li>✓ Carry out day to day activities.</li> <li>✓ Heavy tasks may cause discomfort.</li> <li>✓ Start to lift your arm over-head.</li> </ul>

Advice for a new injury:

**Cold packs:** A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. The ice must never be in direct contact with the skin.

**Rest:** Try to rest your shoulder for the first 24-72 hours. However, it is important to maintain movement. Gently move your shoulder following the exercises shown. These should not cause too much pain. This will ensure your shoulder does not become stiff and it will help the healing process.

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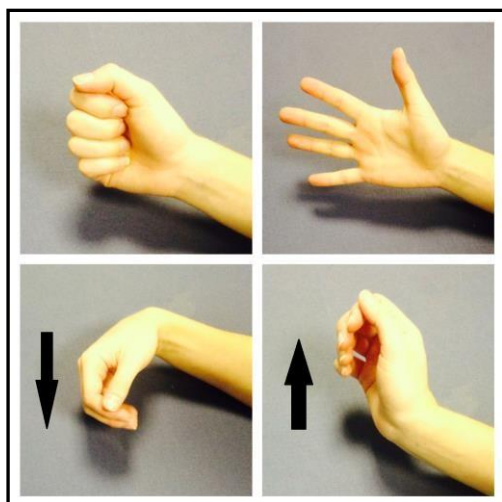
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## Exercises:

If you have stiffness in your elbow or hand from wearing the sling, you may wish to perform these exercises first. Once they become easy you can stop these but make sure you continue the shoulder exercises.

### Initial Exercises to be done 5-6 times a day



#### Finger and wrist flexion and extension

Open and close your hand as shown 10-15 times. Then move your wrist up and down 10-15 times.

After a few days, hold a soft ball / ball of socks. Squeeze the ball as hard as possible without pain. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



#### Elbow Bend to Straighten

Bend and straighten your elbow so you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist if necessary. Do not push into pain.

Repeat 10 - 15 times if there is no increase in pain.

#### Forearm Rotations

Put your elbow at your side. Bend it to 90 degrees. Slowly rotate your palm up and down until you feel a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to assist if necessary. Do not push into pain.

Repeat 10 - 15 times if there is no increase in pain.

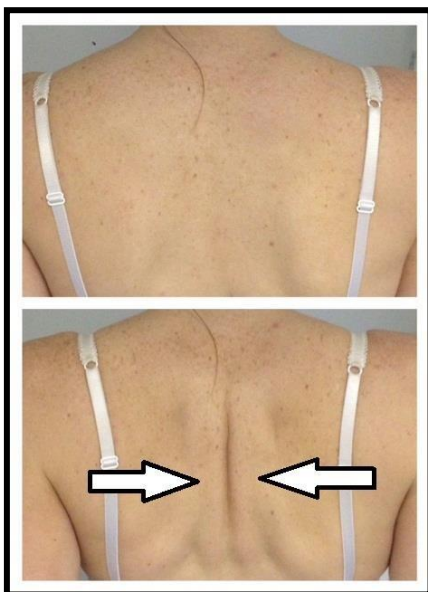
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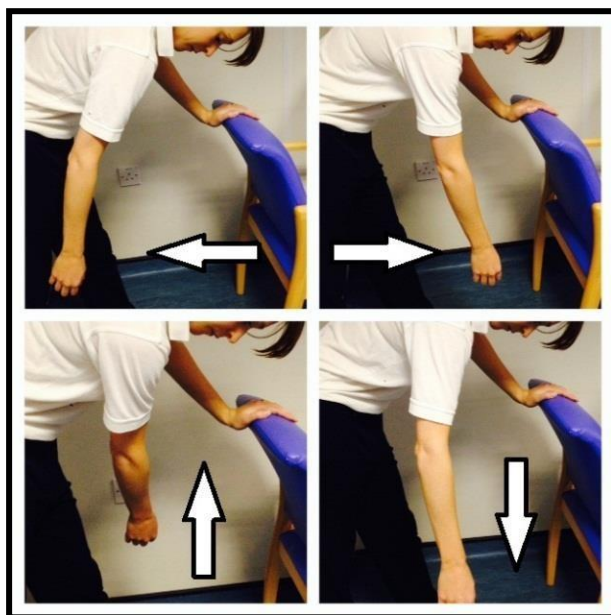
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### Postural awareness

Bring your shoulders back and squeeze your shoulder blades together as shown in the picture. Do this with or without your sling on.

Hold the position for 20-30 seconds and repeat 5 times as long as there is no increase in symptoms.



### Shoulder pendulum exercises

Stand and lean forward supporting yourself with your other hand. Try to relax your injured arm and let it hang down.

1. Swing your arm slowly and gently forwards and backwards.
2. Swing your arm slowly and gently side to side.
3. Swing your arm slowly and gently in circles clockwise.

Continue for approximately 1-2 minutes in total provided there is no increase in symptoms. Remember to try and relax your arm.

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## Stage 2 Exercises

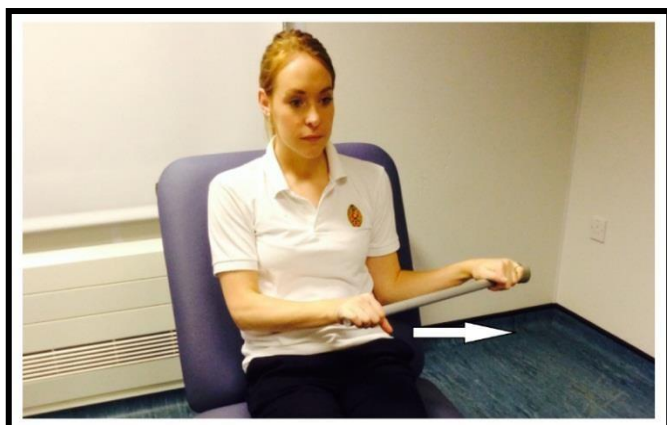
To start at 3 weeks post injury and do to 3-4 times a day:



### Active assisted Shoulder flexion

Use your other hand to lift your arm up in front of you as shown in the pictures.

Repeat 10 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.



### Active assisted External rotation

Keep the elbow of your injured arm tucked into your side and your elbow bent. Hold onto a stick/umbrella/golf club or similar.

Use your unaffected arm to push your injured hand outwards. Remember to keep your elbow tucked in. Push until you feel a stretch.

If you don't have a stick you could simply hold the injured arm at the wrist and guide it outwards.

Hold for 5 seconds then return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.

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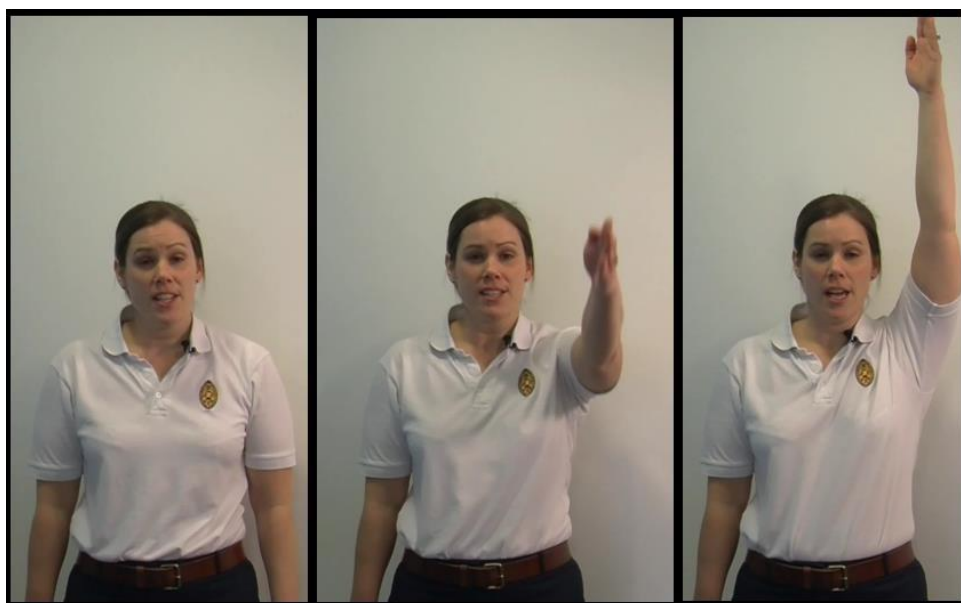
### Stage 3 exercises

To start 6 weeks post injury and to do 4-5 times a day:

When you have full range of movement without pain, using your other hand to support, you can start to do the exercises without the support of your other hand; this is known as active range of movement. Then when you have regained your full range of movement without the support of the other arm you can start to build up your regular activities.

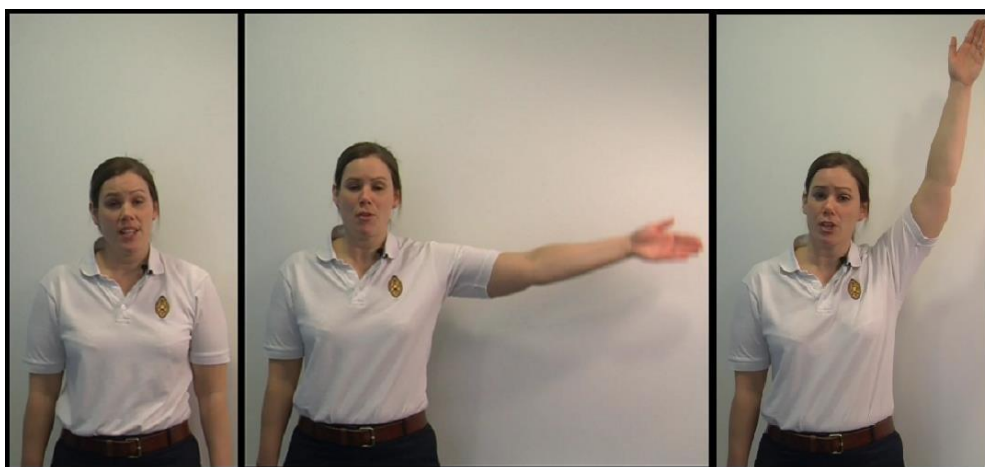
#### Active Forward flexion:

With your thumb facing up, try to move your arm up, keeping it close beside your body.



#### Active Abduction:

With your thumb facing up and outwards, try to move your arm in a big arc out to the side.



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**Active External rotation**

With your elbow by your side, rotate your forearm outwards, keeping your elbow at about 90 degrees in flexion.



- ✓ Repeat these 3 exercises 10 times each, 4-5 times a day.
- ✓ Only go as far as you can naturally, without doing any trick movements to try and get further.
- ✓ The movement will increase over time and should not be forced.

If you are having problems progressing with the exercises and have a follow-up consultation booked, please do let the clinician know so that they can review the exercises and refer you on to Physiotherapy if necessary.

If you are on an independent management programme, then please contact us using the number at the top of the letter so that we can also arrange physiotherapy for you.

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