



SPECIAL REPORT

Shoulder Pain



the
physiotherapy
centre

Xavier is the Founder of Xcel Health Group, a growing network of physiotherapy clinics across South East England, including The Physiotherapy Centre in Kent. He leads an expanding team of specialist physiotherapists and is committed to maintaining the highest standards of patient care.

With a strong focus on both growth and clinical excellence, Xavier continues to drive the expansion of the Group while ensuring outstanding patient outcomes remain at the core of its services. He is hands-on in his approach and passionate about providing clients with expert advice, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health.



Health advice disclaimer

I have made every effort to ensure that I accurately represent the injury advice and prognosis provided throughout this report. However, examples of injuries and their prognosis are based on typical cases that I commonly see in my physiotherapy clinics.

The information given is not intended to represent every individual's potential injury. As with any injury, each person's symptoms can vary widely, and recovery can differ depending on factors such as background, genetics, previous medical history, adherence to exercises, posture, motivation to follow their physiotherapist's advice, and various other physical factors.

It is impossible to provide a 100% accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination. Likewise, the advice given for managing an injury cannot be considered fully accurate without an assessment by one of the physiotherapists at The Physiotherapy Centre. There is a risk of injury if due diligence is not followed and appropriate professional advice is not sought. No guarantees of specific results are expressly made or implied in this report.



Introduction

I have put this report together to let you, my patient, know what's important when it comes to the shoulder and shoulder pain. This report is meant for anybody who does not want to read long complicated explanations on the internet about shoulders. Or it could be anybody who wants to know a bit more about shoulders and injuries.

This booklet has been put together following many years of consultations and thousands of conversations with people who have had shoulder pain, questions that come through when people ring up my clinics or that are sent in via email or social media. However, the one thing that all of the people who have asked these questions have in common is that they have shoulder pain and want me and my team to sort it out and make them better.

Every shoulder is different and every problem is individual to the person who owns it! That's why every plan for reducing shoulder pain and looking at injuries needs to be individually tailored to you. I've added some hints and tips to help you look after your shoulders, but if you are in pain and it does not get better, then a trip to a physiotherapist might help. The earlier you talk to someone, the less time you will be in pain.

I hope that you find this useful and that it has answered any questions that you may have about your shoulder pain and the role that physiotherapy can have in your recovery.

If you can't find the answers you are looking for then please give us a ring on [01795 435060](tel:01795435060) or email us at info@thephysiotherapycentre.co.uk and we will do our very best to answer your question.

What is the shoulder?

The shoulder is a really important joint in your body, as it allows your arms to move. It is made up of 3 bones, the collar bone (clavicle), upper arm bone (humerus) and the shoulder blade (scapula), lots of cartilage, tendon and muscle. It's a complicated piece of equipment and there is a lot that can go wrong. That's why there are lots of different injuries that you can get. If you've ever heard of any type of injury, it will usually be muscle, tendon, cartilage or joint.

The shoulder has all four. This increases the risk of it being injured, especially with all of the work it has to do in a lifetime! Your shoulder is incredibly flexible and it is one of the most mobile joints in your whole body. You can pretty much move your arm anywhere you want and your shoulder makes this happen. But with this extra movement, you can get problems that you are less likely to get with other joints, such as dislocation. There is a natural liquid in your shoulder. This helps the bones move over each other without them catching or jarring, as it reduces friction. It has the same function as the oil you would use on creaky hinges or joints at home.

Who can get shoulder pain?

Everyone. It doesn't matter who you are and what you do, you can get shoulder pain. The causes of shoulder pain are numerous and I will look at the most common in a minute. But every shoulder pain has one thing in common. It hurts. If you have shoulder pain, you will be suffering. It might be stopping you from moving your arm completely, meaning that you need help doing even the most simple things. Or it might just be slightly annoying. But it does hurt! Physiotherapy can be the answer to help you get back to what you were doing before your shoulder started hurting. Recently there has been a rise in shoulder pain among office workers. Sitting for long periods and making repetitive movements is the biggest culprit.

What are the main causes of shoulder pain?

Rotator cuff tear or tendonitis – this is by far the most common injury I see in my clinics. It sounds really fancy, but what it means is that you have a problem with the muscles that surround your shoulder joint. It will cause a dull ache in your shoulder and this will increase when you move your arm away from your body.

You won't be able to move your arm behind your back and it will stop you from sleeping well. It may make it difficult to do simple things such as brush your teeth or comb your hair (if you are lucky enough to have hair!) Unfortunately, the older you get, the more likely you are to suffer from this. But people who have jobs in which they need to reach above their heads a lot can also have this, such as painters, builders or carpenters.

Frozen shoulder

This is also a fairly common injury that I see. It happens when the tissue around your shoulder gets swollen. When the swelling goes down, the tissue tightens and shrinks and this is what causes your pain. It will cause shoulder pain and stiffness that doesn't go away and the pain can actually get worse at night and disturb your sleep. It will also be really hard to move your arm and shoulder as the pain is so bad. Frozen shoulder is a condition that will need long term treatment and can last from 18 months to well over 3 years under treatment, even longer if you don't do anything about it. Usually, frozen shoulder is a result of an injury or some surgery that you had which stops you from moving your arm normally. But people who have diabetes are also more prone to this.

Shoulder impingement

This is another common injury. This occurs when the tendon that you have inside your shoulder rubs or catches on the nearby tissue and bone when you lift your arm up. It then affects the rotator cuff tendon (see number 1), so you sometimes get 2 injuries in 1.

If you think you have a shoulder impingement, then the things to look out for are pain that's worse when you lift your arm above your head, pain in the top and outside of your shoulder, a weakness in your arm or a pain at night that stops you from sleeping or wakes you up.

The condition can last anywhere from a few months to a few years, depending on how often you get treatment and how early you catch it. There are a few different causes of this: an injury or overuse of the shoulder (doing sports such as swimming or tennis), wear and tear with age, the little sacs that contain the fluid around your shoulder becoming swollen or problems with bone growths or shape. These last 2 are often things you are born with or occur later in life.

Shoulder dislocation

This will usually happen when you fall on your arm heavily. People who play contact sports such as rugby are those who have this injury the most frequently. But something as innocuous as a slip, trip or fall, followed by a bad landing or attempt to stop you falling can also cause this. A shoulder dislocation is usually obvious as you won't be able to move your arm and it will be extremely painful. Your shoulder will suddenly look square and you may even be able to see the top of the bone through your skin. Under no circumstances should you try to pop your shoulder back.

You should seek medical help and try to keep your arm as still as possible until you receive medical attention. You should also place something soft in the gap between your arm and your chest to support it. As a physio, I only see people after their shoulder has been put back in place. Because of the incredible amount of pressure that has been put on your shoulder when it was firstly dislocated and then afterwards put back, the whole shoulder is damaged. Some people will need an operation, but usually we can treat people afterwards.

Cervical radiculopathy

This is a fancy term for a pinched or trapped nerve! It happens when a nerve that is in your neck is squashed as it leaves your backbone. It causes a pain that you can feel in your shoulder, muscle weakness and numbness. It is something that is fairly simple to treat with physiotherapy and ice/ heat can also help.

Who can get shoulder pain?

There are 5 main ways that I would suggest doing this. Some can be more effective than others, depending on the injury and the level of pain. Physiotherapy treatment – this will allow a trained professional to take a good look at your injury and make an assessment and then deliver you a diagnosis. Once you have the diagnosis, they will talk to you about a plan to get you better. A good physiotherapist will offer a mixture of hands-on treatment and massage coupled with exercises that you will be shown how to do to help you.

One word of caution:

Exercises are fantastic for any type of injury. But they won't help if you are not doing them right or if you are doing the wrong ones. If you look for a program of

exercises on the internet, you will find hundreds of websites. These exercises will work, but only if you are doing the right ones in the right way. If you do exercises that are not meant for the type of injury YOU have, then they will have no effect and you will just think that exercises are a waste of time. In fact, they could be putting more strain on the part of the shoulder where you have the injury.

Rest

This is probably the easiest of the methods. But, if you are an active person, it can be a real challenge! You will need to work out which activities or movements are causing you pain and then stop making them. Sounds simple, right? Actually, it isn't as easy as that. The most important thing is that you try to protect your shoulder as much as you can and this may involve a period without sport or the active movement that causes your pain. If you return to an activity too quickly, then you risk having the same problem as before.

Ice

Another easier one, but can be a little unpleasant if you do it wrong! You need to find something that is frozen (ideally ice cubes, but frozen vegetables such as peas/sweetcorn will do the trick) and wrap it up in a towel. The towel is really important as it will stop you getting ice burn on your shoulder. You will need to keep the ice on the injury for 5-10 minutes and do this at least 3 times a day. This is a natural method to reduce pain and swelling and can be very effective just after the shoulder pain has started.

Injection therapy

This is usually a steroid and anaesthetic solution which is injected into the shoulder joint. But there are a number of natural injection remedies out there as well which can work well, depending on the injury and the severity. This can often provide a longer-term relief, with another injection usually being required at least 6 months down the line. Injection therapy can provide almost instant relief and this is a good solution for chronic problems. There is a lot of information out there about injection therapy, but I have written a blog for my patients to explain it in a little more detail: <https://thephysiotherapycentre.co.uk/steroid-injection.php>

Anti-Inflammatory Medicine

This has its place in the list, but it is one to take under advisement and treat with caution. Whilst the medicine will reduce the swelling and reduce the pain, it will not help with the underlying cause of the shoulder pain. Once the medicine has worn off, then nothing will have changed. I would strongly suggest limiting the use of these drugs and go for a more natural method such as ice or physiotherapy.

My top tips to help avoid shoulder injury

Over the course of treating all types of shoulder problems that you have read about here (and some that you haven't), I have come up with a number of tips to help you look after your shoulder. They may sound really obvious but they will significantly reduce the chances of you hurting your shoulder.

- Stretching is really important as it makes your shoulder more flexible and allows you to extend how much you can move it. This is just as important if you work at a desk as if you were an athlete. When you sit at a desk, your head and shoulders can be pulled forward and this increases your risk of shoulder impingement (number 3). Just a few simple stretches can greatly reduce your chances of hurting yourself.
- Improving your posture is the key to preventing shoulder injuries. This is equally as valid if you are sat at a desk or lifting heavy weights. When lifting, keep your back straight and lift with your legs. Make sure that you keep your shoulders straight. If you are not doing it properly, your shoulders will get closer to your ears! If you are working at a desk, make sure that you are keeping your back straight and sitting at the right angle to your desk and that your keyboard is at the right height and distance. A standing desk can be a good tool for proper posture and prevent shoulder, neck and back pain.
- Sleeping in the right position. Sounds basic, but we don't generally think about how the position we sleep in affects our shoulders. If your shoulder is hurting when you sleep and you lie on it, then try lying on the other side of your back. It reduces the chance of you making it worse and gives the shoulder a chance to rest.

- Increasing the strength of your shoulder and back muscles can reduce dislocations and other shoulder injuries by increasing the stability and reducing the pressure on your joints.
- If you are taking part in any kind of sport, make sure that you warm up before you start. Whilst it won't stop you from getting injured, it will greatly reduce your chances of hurting yourself.
- Make sure that your shoulder is never in one position for too long. Keep moving it and if you are sat for a long time at a desk, get up from time to time and walk about. Not only will it keep your shoulder in better shape, but it will also make you more productive and happier!
- If your shoulder hurts or it doesn't feel right, then you should consult an expert as soon as possible. This could be when lifting, leaning or just resting. In any case, the ideal person to consult should be a physiotherapist. If you consult a doctor, they will refer you for physiotherapy, so you might as well cut out the middleman!
- Flexibility is key. If you keep your shoulder flexible by exercising it or straightening and bending it, then this will slow down any process of ageing of the joint.

I hope that these explanations and tips have been useful. Whilst I can't promise that by following my advice will make you shoulder injury free forever, I believe that you can greatly reduce your chances of hurting yourself and being in pain. If it's too late and you are already in pain, then the best thing to do is to consult with an expert. I hope you stay injury free and are able to enjoy the life YOU want, free of pain.

Take care,
Xavier 😊



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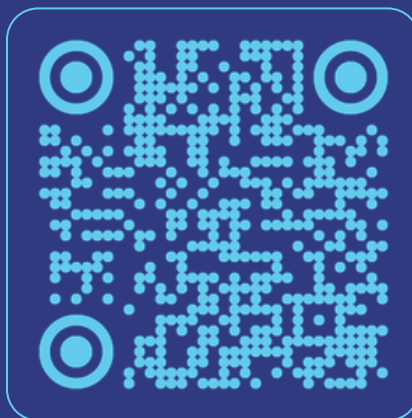
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