



COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.



Get the latest public health information from CDC: <https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Get the latest research information from NIH: <https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>

[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Shoulder Injuries and Disorders

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/shoulderinjuriesanddisorders.html>

Shoulder Injuries and Disorders

Your shoulder joint is composed of three bones: the clavicle (collarbone), the scapula (shoulder blade), and the humerus (upper arm bone). Your shoulders are the most movable joints in your body. They can also be unstable because the ball of the upper arm is larger than the shoulder socket that holds it. To remain in a stable or normal position, the shoulder must be anchored by muscles, tendons, and ligaments.

Because your shoulder can be unstable, it can be easily injured. Common problems include


- Sprains and strains [<https://medlineplus.gov/sprainsandstrains.html>]
- Dislocations [<https://medlineplus.gov/dislocatedshoulder.html>]
- Separations
- Tendinitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/tendinitis.html>]
- Bursitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/bursitis.html>]
- Torn rotator cuffs [<https://medlineplus.gov/rotatorcuffinjuries.html>]
- Frozen shoulder
- Fractures [<https://medlineplus.gov/fractures.html>] (broken bones)
- Arthritis [<https://medlineplus.gov/arthritis.html>]

Health care providers diagnose shoulder problems by using your medical history, a physical exam, and imaging tests.


Often, the first treatment for shoulder problems is RICE. This stands for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Other treatments include exercise and medicines to reduce pain and swelling. If those don't work, you may need surgery.

NIH: National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases

Start Here

- [Questions and Answers about Shoulder Problems](https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/shoulder-problems) [<https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/shoulder-problems>]
 (National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases)
- [Shoulder Pain and Common Shoulder Problems](https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/shoulder-pain-and-common-shoulder-problems/) [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/shoulder-pain-and-common-shoulder-problems/>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- Shoulder Problems: Symptom Checker Flowchart [<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/shoulder-problems/?adfree=true>]
(American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/sintoma/problemas-del-hombro/?adfree=true>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Arthrography [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=arthrog>]
 (American College of Radiology, Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/sp/info.cfm?pg=arthrog>]

- **MRI of the Musculoskeletal System** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=muscmr>]
(American College of Radiology, Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/sp/info.cfm?pg=muscmr>]
- **Musculoskeletal Ultrasound** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=musculous>]
(American College of Radiology, Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/sp/info.cfm?pg=musculous>]
- **Shoulder MRI** [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=shouldermr>]
(American College of Radiology, Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/sp/info.cfm?pg=shouldermr>]

Treatments and Therapies

- **Cortisone Shots** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cortisone-shots/about/pac-20384794?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/tests-procedures/cortisone-shots/about/pac-20384794?p=1>]
- **Joint and Soft Tissue Injections** [<https://familydoctor.org/joint-and-soft-tissue-injections/?adfree=true>]
(American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/inyecciones-en-las-articulaciones-y-en-los-tejidos-blandos/?adfree=true>]
- **Shoulder Arthroscopy** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/treatment/shoulder-arthroscopy/>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Shoulder Joint Replacement** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/treatment/shoulder-joint-replacement/>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)

Living With

- **Rotator Cuff and Shoulder Rehabilitation Exercises** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/recovery/rotator-cuff-and-shoulder-conditioning-program/rotator-cuff-pdf/>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)

Related Issues





- **Limb-Girdle Muscular Dystrophy (LGMD)** [<https://www.mda.org/disease/limb-girdle-muscular-dystrophy>]
(Muscular Dystrophy Association)
Also in Spanish [https://www.mda.org/sites/default/files/publications/Facts_LGMD_Spanish.pdf]

Specifics

- **Arthritis of the Shoulder** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/arthritis-of-the-shoulder>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Chronic Shoulder Instability** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/chronic-shoulder-instability>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Clavicle Fracture (Broken Collarbone)** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/clavicle-fracture-broken-collarbone/>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Frozen Shoulder** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/frozen-shoulder/>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Separated Shoulder** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/separated-shoulder/symptoms-causes/syc-20354049?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- **Shoulder Fracture** [<https://www.assh.org/handcare/condition/shoulder-fracture>] (American Society for Surgery of the Hand)
- **Shoulder Instability** [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/shoulder-instability/?adfree=true>]
(American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/inestabilidad-del-hombro/?adfree=true>]
- **Shoulder Trauma (Fractures and Dislocations)** [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/shoulder-trauma-fractures-and-dislocations>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **SLAP Tears** [<https://www.orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/slap-tears/>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- **Tendinitis and Bursitis** [<https://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Diseases-Conditions/Tendinitis-Bursitis>] (American College of Rheumatology)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.rheumatology.org/I-Am-A/Patient-Caregiver/Enfermedades-y-Condiciones/Tendinitis-Bursitis-Espanol>]

Clinical Trials

- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Acromioclavicular Joint Injuries** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Acromioclavicular+Joint%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Shoulder Dislocation** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Shoulder+Dislocation%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Shoulder Fractures** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Shoulder+Fractures%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Shoulder Injuries** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Shoulder%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- **Article: Comparison of ultrasound-guided and nerve stimulator-guided interscalene blocks as a sole...** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32871884>]
- **Article: What happens to the long head of the biceps tendon after...** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32862691>]
- **Article: Discrimination between pain and contracture in limited passive motion patients with...** [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32756131>]
- **Shoulder Injuries and Disorders -- see more articles** [[https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=\(shoulder+dislocation\[majr\]+OR+shoulder+fractures\[majr\]+OR+shoulder+injuries\[majr\]+OR+shoulder+impingement+syndrome\[majr\]+OR+\(acromioclavicular+joint\[majr\]+AND+dislocations\[majr\]\)\)+AND+english\[la\]+AND+humans\[mh\]+AND+\(jsubsetk\[text\]+OR+jsubsetaim\[text\]+OR+jsubsetn\[text\]+OR+patient+education+handout\[pt\]\)+NOT+\(letter\[pt\]+OR+editorial\[pt\]+OR+case+reports\[pt\]\)+AND+%22last+2+Years%22\[edat\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=(shoulder+dislocation[majr]+OR+shoulder+fractures[majr]+OR+shoulder+injuries[majr]+OR+shoulder+impingement+syndrome[majr]+OR+(acromioclavicular+joint[majr]+AND+dislocations[majr]))+AND+english[la]+AND+humans[mh]+AND+(jsubsetk[text]+OR+jsubsetaim[text]+OR+jsubsetn[text]+OR+patient+education+handout[pt])+NOT+(letter[pt]+OR+editorial[pt]+OR+case+reports[pt])+AND+%22last+2+Years%22[edat])]

Find an Expert

- **National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases** [<https://www.niams.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niams.nih.gov/es/portal-en-espanol>]

Patient Handouts

- **Brachial plexopathy** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001418.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001418.htm>]
- **Broken collarbone – aftercare** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000529.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000529.htm>]
- **Frozen shoulder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000455.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000455.htm>]
- **Frozen shoulder – aftercare** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000550.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000550.htm>]
- **Shoulder arthroscopy** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007206.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007206.htm>]
- **Shoulder CT scan** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007346.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007346.htm>]
- **Shoulder MRI scan** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007359.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007359.htm>]
- **Shoulder pain** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003171.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003171.htm>]
- **Using your shoulder after surgery** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000175.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000175.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Brachial plexopathy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001418.htm>]

Broken collarbone – aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000529.htm>]

Fractured clavicle in the newborn [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001588.htm>]

Frozen shoulder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000455.htm>]

Frozen shoulder – aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000550.htm>]

Shoulder arthroscopy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007206.htm>]

Shoulder CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007346.htm>]

Shoulder MRI scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007359.htm>]

Shoulder pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003171.htm>]

Shoulder replacement [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007387.htm>]

Shoulder replacement – discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000178.htm>]

Shoulder separation – aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000562.htm>]

Shoulder surgery – discharge [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000179.htm>]

Using your shoulder after replacement surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000176.htm>]

Using your shoulder after surgery [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000175.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Arm Injuries and Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/arminjuriesanddisorders.html>]

Brachial Plexus Injuries [<https://medlineplus.gov/brachialplexusinjuries.html>]

Dislocated Shoulder [<https://medlineplus.gov/dislocatedshoulder.html>]

Hand Injuries and Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/handinjuriesanddisorders.html>]

Rotator Cuff Injuries [<https://medlineplus.gov/rotatorcuffinjuries.html>]

Thoracic Outlet Syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/thoracicoutletsyndrome.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Shoulder Injuries and Disorders* is the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases [<http://www.niams.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English

[<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/shoulderinjuriesanddisorders.html>] on *Shoulder Injuries and Disorders*

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our **disclaimer**

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our **quality guidelines**

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .