

**Patient
Information**

Fractured clavicle and Acromioclavicular (AC) joint injuries

Introduction

This leaflet has been given to you because you have injured your shoulder and an X-ray suggests you have fractured your clavicle (sometimes known as your collar bone) or injured your Acromioclavicular (AC) joint which is where your clavicle meets your shoulder.

What are these injuries?

Both a fractured clavicle and an AC joint injury commonly occur following a fall onto the tip of the shoulder or, due to a collision with another player during contact sports such as rugby or football. These injuries may also occur following a fall onto an elbow or outstretched arm. In these instances, forces are transmitted up through the arm and into the shoulder. If the forces are severe enough, they may cause the clavicle to break or the AC joint to become damaged.

What is a fracture clavicle?

A fractured clavicle is simple a break or bend in your collar bone and is one of the most common fractures seen in sport.



Treatment for a fracture clavicle

Initially this is a painful injury which is usually successfully treated with conservative management (without surgery), even in cases where the bone appears out of place. Treatment is aimed at ensuring adequate pain relief and to immobilise the fracture. Immobilising the limb and fracture is achieved by wearing a broad arm sling. The support will need to be worn for

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**Emergency
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between 2 to 3 weeks but you will be advised by staff in the Fracture Clinic. It is not possible to completely immobilise this bone, therefore, in the immediate future, movements may be painful. Sleeping may be difficult at first but a pillow placed behind the shoulder to stop the shoulder moving will help.

What is an AC joint injury?

An AC joint injury (also called a 'shoulder separation'), is not the same as shoulder dislocation.



The AC joint is at the top of your shoulder between your clavicle and your scapula (shoulder blade). It allows you to move your arm over your head and across your body. There are a number of ligaments around the joint to help it stabilise and most injuries occur when these ligaments are overstretched. The amount of damage can vary from a mild sprain to a complete tear.

AC joint injury treatment

Most patients with an AC joint injury start to feel better within a few days or a week of the injury. However, full ligament healing will take at least 6 weeks. During this time it is important to protect your AC joint ligaments from overstretching the immature scar tissue. It can be helpful initially to use a broad arm sling which reduces the strain on your AC joint. Regular pain relief such as paracetamol is recommended.

Follow up for fracture clavicle and an injured AC joint

A follow up appointment will have been given to you prior to discharge from the Emergency Department. **If you notice any sudden shortness of breath, weakness developing in your arm or hand, or if your pain suddenly becomes worse**

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**please return to the Emergency Department or contact
NHS 111.**

Contact information

Orthopaedic Outpatients Appointments

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3147

Monday to Friday, 8:45am to 4:30pm

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 6137

Monday to Friday, 8:45am to 4:30pm

NHS 111

Tel: 111

Further information

NHS Choices

Website: www.nhs.uk

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