

## **Dislocated Shoulder**

The shoulder joint is your body's most mobile joint. It can turn in many directions, but this advantage also makes your shoulder joint easy to dislocate. A partial dislocation (subluxation) means the head of the upper arm bone (humerus) is partially out of the socket (glenoid). A complete dislocation means it's all the way out. Both partial and complete dislocation cause pain and unsteadiness in your shoulder. Your muscles may have spasms from the disruption, and this can make it hurt more. When your shoulder dislocates time and again, you have shoulder instability.

Symptoms to look for include swelling, numbness, weakness and bruising. Sometimes dislocation may tear ligaments or tendons in your shoulder. Once in awhile, the dislocation may damage your nerves.

Your shoulder joint can dislocate forward, backward or downward. A common type of shoulder dislocation is when your shoulder slips forward (anterior instability). This means your upper arm bone moved forward and down out of its joint. It may happen when you put your arm in a throwing position.

Your doctor will examine your shoulder and may order an X-ray. It's important for you to tell your doctor how it happened. Was it an injury? Have you ever dislocated your shoulder before? Your doctor will place the ball of the upper arm bone (humerus) back into the joint socket. This process is called closed reduction. Your severe pain stops almost immediately once your shoulder joint is back in place.

### **Rest and rehabilitation**

Your doctor may immobilize your shoulder in a sling or other device for several weeks following treatment. You should get plenty of rest and ice the sore area 3-4 times a day. After the pain and swelling go down, your doctor will prescribe rehabilitation exercises for you. These help restore your shoulder's range of motion and strengthen your muscles. Rehab may also help you prevent dislocating your shoulder again in the future. You begin by doing gentle muscle toning exercises. Later, you can work up to using weights.

If your shoulder dislocation becomes a chronic condition, a brace can sometimes help. However, if therapy and bracing fail, then you may need surgery to repair or tighten torn or stretched ligaments, which help hold the joint in place.

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