

Shoulder Subacromial Decompression & AC Joint Excision Arthroplasty Recovery Guide

Discharge

You will normally be discharged on the day of surgery.

Sling

The sling is to be worn for 2 weeks unless advised otherwise.

You may come out of the sling when sitting comfortably in a chair, using a computer, eating, and performing exercises.

Bandage / Dressings / Sutures

You will be discharged from hospital with a dressing covering your shoulder wound. Leave the dressing in place until your 2-3 week review and we will remove it. The dressings are water resistant. Showering is fine but please keep your dressings relatively dry until your post op appointment.

Swelling / Icing

Post-operative swelling of the shoulder is normal and should gradually decrease over the course of a few weeks. Regular icing is effective for managing both pain and swelling. Continue icing your shoulder for as long as swelling persists. Apply ice to your shoulder 3-5 times a day for 20 minutes at a time.

If the swelling worsens, or if you notice redness around the wound or experience a fever, please contact our office immediately or see your local doctor. For after-hours concerns, you can also reach out to the hospital emergency department.

Pain Relief / Medications (*allergies permitting*)

Your anaesthetist will have prescribed a range of painkillers for you to go home with. You should take them as prescribed. In general you should take paracetamol regularly, followed by anti-inflammatories if prescribed and then strong painkillers (such as Palexia/Tapentadol) for top-up pain relief. Cease these medications as soon as the pain allows.

Dr Robinson recommends taking Vitamin C 1000-1500 mg daily from 2 days prior to surgery until at least 6 weeks post surgery.

Post-Operative Appointments

2-3 weeks: Your first post op clinic review.

A nurse will remove your dressing and review your wound.

Begin seeing your physiotherapist.

3 months: Review to see how you are progressing.

These notes are intended as a guide only. Some of the details may vary depending on your individual circumstances and at the discretion of your surgeon. © Balance Orthopaedics 2025

Return to Work / Driving

A reasonable goal for returning to office work is within 2-4 weeks. For more physically demanding jobs, the target is typically 2-3 months.

Driving can usually be resumed around 3-4 weeks, once the sling is no longer required. It is important to note that you will not be covered by your car insurance if you are involved in a motor vehicle accident before 3-4 weeks.

Return to Activities guide

Running: 4 weeks

Swimming: 2 months

Tennis: 2 months

Golf: 2 months

Gym based activities may commence at 2 months with modification.

Physical therapy

0-2 weeks post operation

Perform these exercises 3-5 times a day.

Neck range of motion exercises ([preview here](#))

- Stand or sit comfortably in a chair.
- Move your head to look up and down, left to right, tilt your ear toward your left shoulder, then toward your right shoulder

Repeat this exercise 10 times, 3 times per day.



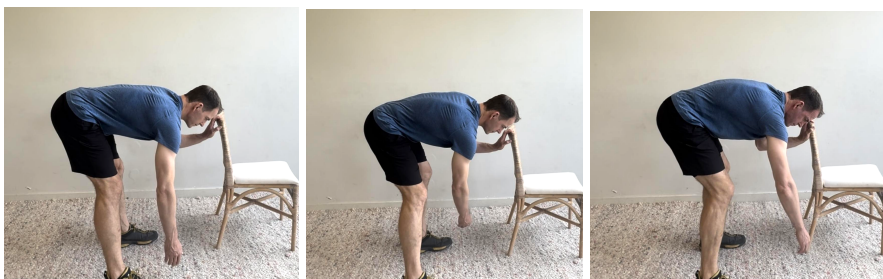
Shoulder blade exercises ([preview here](#))

- Gently squeeze your shoulder blades together, hold for 5-10 seconds, then relax.
- Repeat this exercise 10 times, 3 times per day.



Shoulder pendulum exercise ([preview here](#))

- Bend forward at a 90° angle from the waist, using your non operative hand on a table or chair for support.
- Gently rock your body in a circular motion, allowing your arm to move naturally.
- Move your arm clockwise in circles 10 times, then counterclockwise 10 times. Keep your arm relaxed throughout the exercise.
- The circular motion should be about 23-30 cm wide, with the movement coming from your shoulder joint.
- Initiate the movement from your hips and knees
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Active assisted external rotation ([preview here](#))

- While holding a broomstick with both hands, keep your injured arm at your side with the elbow bent at 90 degrees.
- Rotate your shoulder outward using the injured limb until you reach your limit.
- Then, use your uninjured arm to gently assist in moving through a further range of motion.



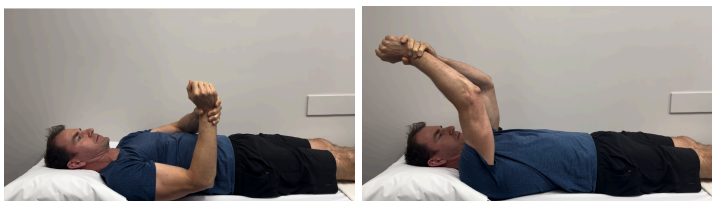
Active assisted shoulder flexion ([preview here](#))

Laying, sitting or standing, hold the hand of your operative arm in front of your chest

- With the support of the uninjured arm, raise both hands slowly towards the ceiling
- Then gently return hands to central position
- Once confident with the exercise, lower your hands behind your head for an extra stretch

Repeat this exercise 10 times, 3 times a day.

Stage 1:



Stage 2:



Stage 3:



>2 weeks post operation

Full active range of motion of shoulder, elbow, forearm, wrist and hand.
Gym based activities for the lower limb as tolerated.

>6 weeks post operation

May return to gym based activities of the upper limb avoiding overhead press and chest press.

>10 weeks post operation

May return to gym based activities with no modifications.