

Guidance for Subacromial Decompression Surgery & Acromio-clavicular Joint Excision

Pain:

A nerve block may be used before the operation, which means that immediately after the operation the shoulder and arm may feel numb. This may last a few hours. After this the shoulder may well be sore and you will be given painkillers to help this whilst in hospital.

The painkillers can be continued after you go home. Ice packs may also help reduce pain. Wrap frozen peas or crushed ice in a damp, cold cloth and place on the shoulder for up to 15 minutes.

Going Home:

If the operation is early in the day, you will be able to go home on the same day of the operation. Otherwise, you will spend one night in hospital.

Wearing a Sling:

This is for comfort only and is normally not needed after 3 to 4 days. Some people find it helpful to continue to wear the sling at night for a little longer if the shoulder feels sore.

The Wound:

Your doctor will tell you if you have any sutures in your keyhole wounds, which may need to be removed. If there are no sutures, the wound may leak for 3 to 4 days. The wounds should be kept dry until healed. This usually takes 5 to 7 days.

Expected Progress:

By 3 weeks movement below shoulder height becomes more comfortable. By this stage you should have almost full range of movement although there will probably be discomfort when moving the arm above the head. At three months after your surgery you will be approximately 80% better and you will continue to improve for up to a year following the operation.

Driving:

You may begin driving one week after your operation or when you feel comfortable.

Returning to work:

This will depend on your occupation. If you have a desk-based job, you may return as soon as you feel able usually after one week.

If your job involves above head activities, you may need 3 weeks off & possibly longer if you have not been able to work prior to your operation.

Leisure activities:

In general, any activity that is painful is best avoided until it becomes pain free. Any painful activity aggravates the inflamed muscle and delays recovery.

You may be able to resume swimming breaststroke as soon as the wounds heal. Golf can begin at six weeks. Any sports that involve repeated above head activity are best avoided until completely pain free, at about three months.

Exercises:

Your physiotherapist will discuss your individual exercises with you before you leave hospital.

Complications:

Other than very rare anaesthetic complications, an infection may occur but is also very rare. 1 in 10 people will not improve following this operation.

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