

Patient Information Sheet

Acromioclavicular Joint (ACJ) Injuries

What do I need to know?



Edinburgh
Orthopaedics

What is my diagnosis?

You have injured your acromioclavicular joint (ACJ). This is the joint at the end of your collarbone. The type of injury you have suffered is painful but almost always heals without the need for surgery. A sling is provided for your comfort.

WHAT DOES THE X-RAY LOOK LIKE



What happens next?

Your X-rays will be reviewed by a radiologist (X-ray expert) and a surgeon. In most circumstances, you will get a call from one of our Trauma Nurses or Physio Practitioners to discuss your injury and discharge you. Occasionally, we may decide that a further review is necessary, in which case we will send you a clinic appointment

KEY EXERCISES



Top Tips for recovery

- Keep your elbow, wrist, fingers/thumb moving
- Stop or cut down on smoking while the bone is healing (smoking has been proven to slow the healing of ligaments at the ACJ)

Useful phone numbers

ERI: 0131 5361000

SJH: 01506 523000

Waiting list office: 0131 2423437

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What will my recovery be like?

Weeks 1 and 2

- The sling or collar and cuff is simply for your comfort in the initial stages and you **do not** have to wear it. Try to take it off for increasing periods of the day and use your shoulder as it becomes more comfortable.
- The end of your collarbone may not be perfectly straight and there may be a bump. Don't worry about this unless the skin over a sharp point becomes either pale or dusky, in which case, call the contact number below
- You may notice some bruising and swelling at the area of injury and some mild tingling in your hand
- You may begin **EXERCISE 1** moving your arm back & forward and in small circles while it hangs freely

Weeks 3 and 4

- The pain and bruising will begin to reduce
- You should remove the sling for increasing periods of the day if pain allows
- You will notice the range in your shoulder improving

Weeks 5 and 6

- At this stage your ACJ and collarbone should be almost pain free
- You should be back to doing light day to day activities however heavy lifting may still be uncomfortable
- Begin **EXERCISES 2-6**. Repeat x10 each and x3 per day for 4 weeks

What if my ACJ does not heal?

It is extremely uncommon for ACJ injuries not to heal. However, if this was to be the case, you will notice ongoing painful clicking and weakness in the collarbone and shoulder which persists for more than 3 months after the injury. If you are concerned, contact us using the details below.

Getting in Touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email: traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
If you do not receive a reply from this email after 3 working days please use the helpline in hours (8am-5pm): **0131 242 3410**

Please call the Minor Injuries Unit 0131 242 3942 (out of hours) for any **urgent issues**, for example:

- There is a sudden, severe, constant increase in the pain
- You have progressive worsening numbness and weakness in your hand/wrist

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