



24.32 Shoulder Injuries & Work: A Guide for Employees

Introduction

Work-related shoulder injuries are common in work involving repetitive movements, heavy lifting, or awkward postures. These injuries can range from minor strains and sprains to more severe conditions like rotator cuff tears, frozen shoulder, and dislocations. Symptoms may include pain, weakness, limited range of motion, and swelling.

Common Types of Work-Related Shoulder Injuries:

Rotator Cuff Injuries: These involve damage to the tendons and muscles that surround the shoulder joint, often caused by overuse or sudden trauma.

Frozen Shoulder: Characterized by stiffness and pain that limits shoulder movement, sometimes developing after an injury or surgery.

Shoulder Dislocations: Occur when the upper arm bone (humerus) slips out of the shoulder socket, often from a fall or direct impact.

Bursitis: Inflammation of the fluid-filled sacs (bursae) that cushion the shoulder joint, often caused by repetitive motions.

Tendonitis: Inflammation of the tendons in the shoulder, often due to overuse or repetitive strain.

Sprains and Strains: Injuries to the ligaments and muscles, often caused by overexertion or sudden movements.

Causes of Shoulder Injuries at Work:

Repetitive motions: Tasks like typing, assembly line work, or operating machinery can lead to overuse injuries.

Heavy lifting: Jobs requiring frequent lifting of heavy objects can strain the shoulder muscles and tendons.

Awkward postures: Maintaining uncomfortable positions for extended periods can put stress on the shoulder joint.

Falls and impacts: Workplace accidents like falls from heights or direct impacts can cause shoulder injuries.

Overexertion: Pushing oneself beyond physical limits can lead to muscle strains and other injuries.





What can I do?

If you are suffering mild or occasional symptoms, you may first wish to try and manage it yourself. There are a few things that might help, including:

- Try to avoid or reduce activities that make your symptoms worse. Try to introduce a wider range of movement, reduce force or adjust position.
- Over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen may provide short term relief from painful symptoms but should not be relied on for long term treatment.
- Try using a hot or cold pack (or a bag of frozen peas) wrapped in a towel on the affected area for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours.
- Stretching and warm-up exercises can prepare muscles and joints for work
- Use correct lifting techniques and lifting equipment to minimise the risk of further injury.

Exercises that might help:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/arm-shoulder-and-hand-problems-and-conditions/exercises-for-shoulder-problems/>

What if these suggestions don't help?

For moderate or severe symptoms, or for mild symptoms that do not respond to self-care, then you should seek review with your family doctor (GP) or Occupational Health Practitioner.

Special Considerations

If you believe that your symptoms may have been caused by work, you should raise the issue with your manager or Occupational Health Practitioner.

Short term adjustments or a temporary redeployment may provide the rest needed for inflammation to subside and an ergonomic review of the process or task might help to identify and reduce the risk of harmful movement or force causing further problems in the future.

A copy of this & other documentation can be found from <https://mohs.co.uk/resources> or using the QR code at the top of this page.