

After keyhole shoulder surgery: rotator cuff repair or stabilisation

After shoulder surgery



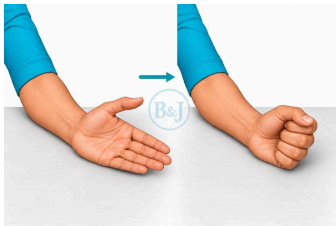
Count the weeks from the day of your operation. The date is on your discharge card.

If your doctor wrote a different plan on your prescription, follow that instead of this page.

Weeks 0–6

Protect the repair while it heals. Keep the elbow, wrist and hand moving. If we only cleaned or trimmed inside the joint and did not repair anything, you will come out of the sling much sooner: follow what we have written on your prescription.

Arm use Sling day and night, taken off only to wash, dress and do these exercises. Use the hand at waist level for eating and writing. Do not lift the arm with its own muscles, and do not push, pull or carry.



Composite fist

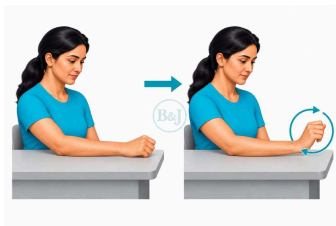
Make a full fist slowly, then open fully.

10 times

Every hour while awake

✓ Should feel
Full movement

✗ Should not feel
Catching that hurts



Wrist circles

Slow circles in both directions.

10 each way

3 times a day

✓ Should feel
Free movement

✗ Should not feel
Pain over the lump



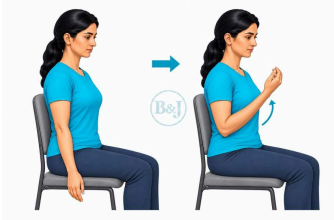
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Elbow bend and straighten

Sit with the arm by your side. Bend the elbow slowly as far as it goes, bringing the hand up, then straighten it fully.

10 times

3 times a day

✓ Should feel

A gentle stretch at the front or back of the elbow

✗ Should not feel

Sharp pain



Pendulum swing

Lean forward, let the arm hang. Swing it gently in circles using your body, not the shoulder.

1 minute

4 times a day

✓ Should feel

The shoulder loosening

✗ Should not feel

Sharp pain



Shoulder blade squeeze

Squeeze the shoulder blades together and down.

10 times

3 times a day

✓ Should feel

Between the shoulder blades

✗ Should not feel

The shoulders lifting

Not yet Lifting the arm away from the body by itself, reaching up, out to the side or behind your back, turning the arm outwards further than we showed you, lying on the operated side, or driving.

Move to the next stage only after we have seen you, and the X-ray if one was planned.



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Weeks 6–12

Sling off. Get the movement back gently: first with the other arm or a table helping, then on its own. Carry on with the earlier exercises.

Arm use Light daily tasks at waist and chest level. Nothing heavier than a full glass of water.



Table slide

Sit at a table, slide the hand forward, letting the body follow.

10 times

3 times a day

✓ **Should feel**

A stretch at the end of the range

✗ **Should not feel**

Pinching at the top



Stick-assisted external rotation

Hold a stick with both hands, elbow tucked in, and push the affected arm outwards.

10 times

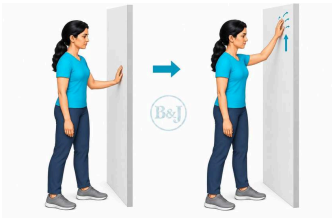
3 times a day

✓ **Should feel**

A stretch at the front of the shoulder

✗ **Should not feel**

Sharp pain



Wall climb

Face a wall, walk the fingers up as high as comfortable, hold, then walk down.

5 times

3 times a day

✓ **Should feel**

A stretch overhead

✗ **Should not feel**

Shrugging to cheat height



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Cross-body stretch

Pull the arm across your chest with the other hand.

Hold 20 seconds

5 times

✓ Should feel

A stretch at the back of the shoulder

✗ Should not feel

Pain in the front

Not yet Lifting, reaching overhead with any weight, or pushing up from a chair with this arm.

Move to the next stage only after we have seen you, and the X-ray if one was planned.



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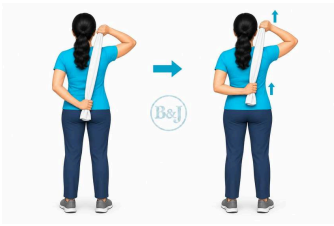
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Months 3–6

Build shoulder strength. Carry on with the earlier exercises.

Arm use Normal daily use. Heavier things a little at a time.



Towel internal rotation

Hold a towel behind your back and gently pull the lower hand up.

Hold 15 seconds

5 times

✓ **Should feel**
A stretch at the front

✗ **Should not feel**
Pinching



Isometric external rotation

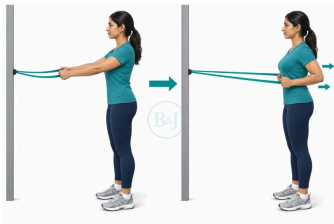
Stand beside a wall, elbow bent and tucked in, press the back of the hand into the wall without moving.

Hold 10 seconds

10 times

✓ **Should feel**
The muscle working

✗ **Should not feel**
Sharp pain



Band row

Pull a band back, squeezing the shoulder blades together.

12 times

Once a day

✓ **Should feel**
The shoulder blade muscles working

✗ **Should not feel**
Shrugging

Not yet Heavy overhead lifting, throwing, swimming or contact sport until we clear you, usually at 4–6 months.

Move to the next stage only after we have seen you, and the X-ray if one was planned.



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Month 6 onwards

Back to sport and heavy work, if we agree at your check-up. Carry on with the strengthening exercises.

Arm use Full.



Isometric external rotation

Stand beside a wall, elbow bent and tucked in, press the back of the hand into the wall without moving.

Hold 10 seconds

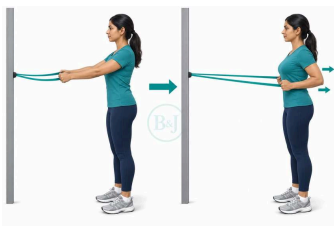
10 times

✓ Should feel

The muscle working

✗ Should not feel

Sharp pain



Band row

Pull a band back, squeezing the shoulder blades together.

12 times

Once a day

✓ Should feel

The shoulder blade muscles working

✗ Should not feel

Shrugging

Not yet Contact sport until we clear you.

Stop and telephone us if

- Pain that keeps getting worse despite the painkillers
- The hand becomes numb, cold, pale or blue
- Wound redness, discharge or fever
- A sudden pop or tearing feeling with new pain, or the shoulder slips out
- You still cannot move the shoulder at all after the sling comes off



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