



COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation.



Get the latest public health information from CDC: <https://www.coronavirus.gov>

Get the latest research information from NIH: <https://www.nih.gov/coronavirus>

[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Dislocated Shoulder

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/dislocatedshoulder.html>

Dislocated Shoulder

What is a dislocated shoulder?

Your shoulder [<https://medlineplus.gov/shoulderinjuriesanddisorders.html>] joint is made up of three bones: your collarbone, your shoulder blade, and your upper arm bone. The top of your upper arm bone is shaped like a ball. This ball fits into a cuplike socket in your shoulder blade. A shoulder dislocation [<https://medlineplus.gov/dislocations.html>] is an injury that happens when the ball pops out of your socket. A dislocation may be partial, where the ball is only partially out of the socket. It can also be a full dislocation, where the ball is completely out of the socket.

What causes a dislocated shoulder?

Your shoulders are the most movable joints in your body. They are also the most commonly dislocated joints.

The most common causes of shoulder dislocations are

- Sports injuries [<https://medlineplus.gov/sportsinjuries.html>]
- Accidents, including traffic accidents
- Falling [<https://medlineplus.gov/falls.html>] on your shoulder or outstretched arm
- Seizures [<https://medlineplus.gov/seizures.html>] and electric shocks, which can cause muscle contractions that pull the arm out of place

Who is at risk for a dislocated shoulder?

A dislocated shoulder can happen to anyone, but they are more common in young men, who are more often involved in sports and other physical activities. Older adults, especially women, are also at higher risk because they are more likely to fall.

What are the symptoms of a dislocated shoulder?

The symptoms of a dislocated shoulder include

- Severe shoulder pain
- Swelling and bruising of your shoulder or upper arm
- Numbness and/or weakness in your arm, neck, hand, or fingers
- Trouble moving your arm
- Your arm seems to be out of place
- Muscle spasms in your shoulder

If you are having these symptoms, get medical treatment right away.

How is a dislocated shoulder diagnosed?

To make a diagnosis, your health care provider will take a medical history and examine your shoulder. Your provider may also ask you to get an x-ray to confirm the diagnosis.

What are the treatments for a dislocated shoulder?

The treatment for dislocated shoulder usually involves three steps:

- The first step is a **closed reduction**, a procedure in which your health care provider puts the ball of your upper arm back into the socket. You may first get medicine to relieve the pain and relax your shoulder muscles. Once the joint is back in place, the severe pain should end.
- The second step is **wearing a sling** or other device to keep your shoulder in place. You will wear it for a few days to several weeks.
- The third step is **rehabilitation**, once the pain and swelling have improved. You will do exercises to improve your range of motion and strengthen your muscles.

You may need surgery if you injure the tissues or nerves around the shoulder or if you get repeated dislocations.

A dislocation can make your shoulder unstable. When that happens, it takes less force to dislocate it. This means that there is a higher risk of it happening again. Your health care provider may ask you to continue doing some exercises to prevent another dislocation.

Start Here

- Dislocated Shoulder [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/dislocated-shoulder>]
(American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)

Symptoms

- Dislocated Shoulder: Symptoms and Causes [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dislocated-shoulder/symptoms-causes/syc-20371715?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/dislocated-shoulder/symptoms-causes/syc-20371715?p=1>]


Diagnosis and Tests

- Dislocated Shoulder: Diagnosis and Treatment [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dislocated-shoulder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20371720?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/dislocated-shoulder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20371720?p=1>]
- Shoulder MRI [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=shouldermr>]
(American College of Radiology, Radiological Society of North America)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/sp/info.cfm?pg=shouldermr>]


Specifics

- Chronic Shoulder Instability [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/chronic-shoulder-instability>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- Shoulder Trauma (Fractures and Dislocations) [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/shoulder-trauma-fractures-and-dislocations>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)

Videos and Tutorials

- Shoulder joint dislocation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000111.htm>]
 (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/anatomyvideos/000111.htm>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Shoulder Dislocation [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Shoulder+Dislocation%22>]
 (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

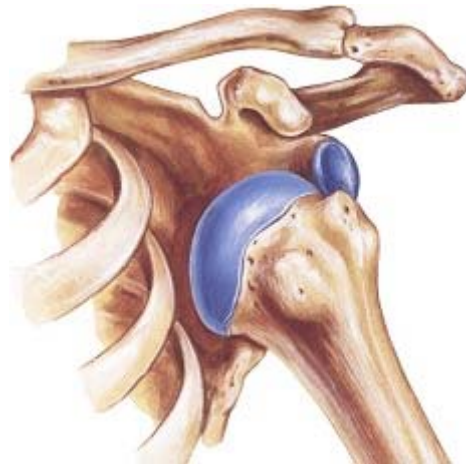
References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Prereduction Shoulder Radiographs should be Routine. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32713478>]
- Article: Early clinical results of minimally invasive coracoclavicular ligament reconstruction can be... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32600145>]
- Article: Arthroscopic Latarjet for Shoulder Instability. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32498956>]
- Dislocated Shoulder -- see more articles [[https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=\(shoulder+dislocation\[mesh\]+OR+shoulder+dislocation\[text\]+OR+dislocated+shoulder\[text\]\)+AND+\(jsubsetk\[text\]+OR+patient+education+handout\[pt\]+OR+jsubsetaim\[text\]+OR+review\[pt\]+OR+guideline\[pt\]+OR+clinical+trial\[pt\]\)+AND+english\[la\]+AND+humans\[mesh\]+NOT+\(letter\[pt\]+OR+editorial\[pt\]+OR+comment\[pt\]\)+AND+%22last+2+Years%22\[edat\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=(shoulder+dislocation[mesh]+OR+shoulder+dislocation[text]+OR+dislocated+shoulder[text])+AND+(jsubsetk[text]+OR+patient+education+handout[pt]+OR+jsubsetaim[text]+OR+review[pt]+OR+guideline[pt]+OR+clinical+trial[pt])+AND+english[la]+AND+humans[mesh]+NOT+(letter[pt]+OR+editorial[pt]+OR+comment[pt])+AND+%22last+2+Years%22[edat])]

Patient Handouts

Visited on 10/30/2020

- Closed reduction of a fractured bone [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000521.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000521.htm>]
- Closed reduction of a fractured bone - aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000522.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000522.htm>]
- Dislocated shoulder - aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000524.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000524.htm>]
- Shoulder CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007346.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007346.htm>]
- Shoulder MRI scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007359.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/007359.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Closed reduction of a fractured bone [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000521.htm>]

Closed reduction of a fractured bone - aftercare
[<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000522.htm>]

Dislocated shoulder - aftercare [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000524.htm>]

Shoulder CT scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007346.htm>]

Shoulder joint dislocation [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/anatomyvideos/000111.htm>]

Shoulder MRI scan [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007359.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Dislocations [<https://medlineplus.gov/dislocations.htm>]

Visited on 10/30/2020

Shoulder Injuries and Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/shoulderinjuriesanddisorders.html>]

Sports Injuries [<https://medlineplus.gov/sportsinjuries.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Dislocated Shoulder* is the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases [<http://www.niams.nih.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our disclaimer [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our quality guidelines [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

U.S. National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Institutes of Health

Page last updated on 1 May 2019

Topic last reviewed: 7 May 2018