



# AC Joint Injury

## About your Injury

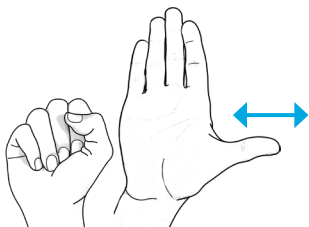
You have an injury to your shoulder to an area called the "AC joint". This is a fibrous joint that connects your collar bone and the top part of your shoulder blade. This injury is most commonly caused by falling directly on to or receiving a direct blow to that shoulder.

## What can I expect?

- These injuries normally take 3-6 weeks to heal, but soft tissue injuries can persist for up to 3 months.
- You have been given a sling to use for comfort/support. Try to rest your shoulder for the first 24-72hrs, however it is important to maintain movement, gently move your shoulder as soon as pain allows, following the exercises shown.
- Regular pain relief may be required.
- You may find it easier to sleep sitting slightly upright propped up with pillows.

## Initial Exercises — Stage 1- start straight away 4-5 times daily.

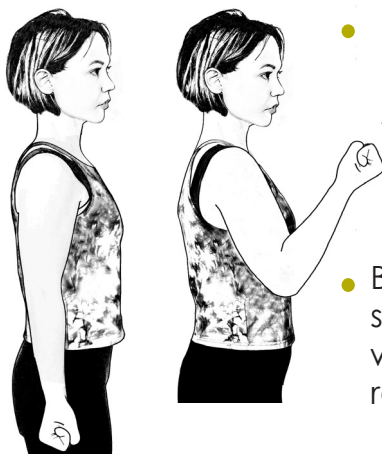
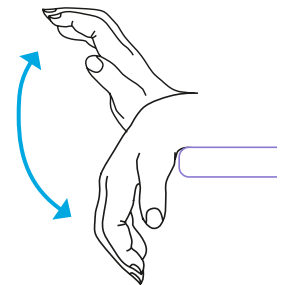
### Finger, wrist and elbow exercises



Flexion and extension

- Open and close your hand 10-15 times

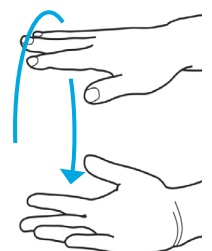
- Move your wrist up and down 10-15 times



- Remove your arm from your sling.
- Bend and straighten elbow within pain free range.

#### Rotate palm up and down

- Put your elbow at your side. Bend it to 90 degrees.
- Slowly rotate your palm up and down within comfort.
- Repeat 10-15 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.

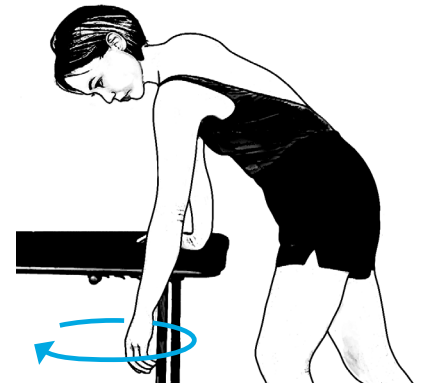


# Shoulder pendulum exercises

Stand and lean forward supporting yourself with your other hand. Try to relax your injured arm and let it hang down.

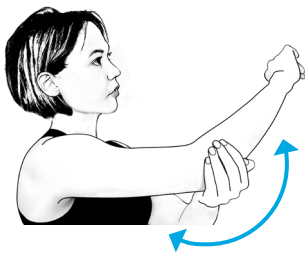
- Swing your arm slowly and gently forwards and backwards.
- Swing your arm slowly and gently side to side.
- Swing your arm slowly and gently in circles clockwise.

Continue for approximately 1-2 minutes in total provided there is no increase in symptoms. Remember to try and relax your arm.

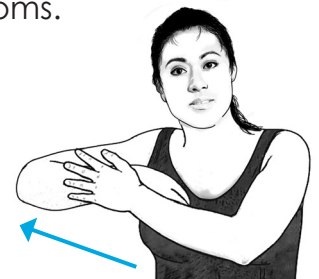


## Stage 2- Exercises: start these exercises at 2 weeks post injury (or as soon as pain allows), do 4-5 times daily.

Repeat these exercises 10 times provided there is no increase in symptoms.

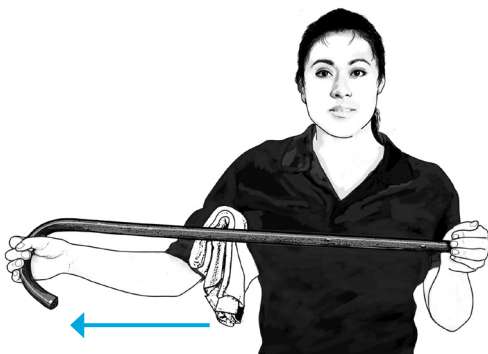


- Active assisted shoulder flexion



- Active assisted abduction

- Active assisted external rotation (push until you feel a stretch and hold for 5 seconds)



## Summary

0-2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wear your sling during the day, except for exercises and personal hygiene, wear off as soon as pain allows.</li> <li>✗ Do not wear your sling at night.</li> <li>✓ Start "initial exercises" shown straight away.</li> <li>✗ Do not lift your elbow above shoulder height as this may be painful.</li> </ul>
2-6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Try not to use the sling.</li> <li>✓ Begin normal light activities with the arm and shoulder.</li> <li>✓ Increase movement as shown in the stage 2 exercises.</li> <li>✗ Avoid heavy lifting for the full 6 weeks.</li> </ul>
6-12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The injury should be largely healed.</li> <li>✓ Resume normal day to day activities but be guided by any pain you experience.</li> <li>✓ Heavy tasks may still cause some discomfort.</li> <li>✓ Start to lift your arm over – head</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ If you are experiencing significant pain and stiffness the please contact us for advice/review.</li> </ul>

**You can return to driving when you are no longer using the sling and have a normal pain free range of movement**

If you have any questions in regard to pain control and medication contact your local pharmacist or GP.

### Contact details:

Raigmore Hospital  
Old Perth Road,  
Inverness, IV12 3UJ.  
Tel: 01463 704000 ext:4294

### Tel: Fracture Clinic Helpline -

Monday to Friday 12 - 3 pm 07779 422980

In an emergency contact NHS 24 - Tel: 111

Issue 2	Date of issue: July 2024	Date of Review: July 2026
Devised by: Fracture clinic, NHS Highland		