

Shoulder Management 101

The shoulder joint is the most mobile joint in our body, but that also makes it the most unstable joint and prone to injury. It is normal to feel frustrated with that constant nagging ache – remember that recovery is rarely linear and there will be ups and downs in your rehab journey. To help you cope, give these tips a try:

EVERYDAY LIFE

- If your shoulder is in pain, you will automatically want to hold your arm to your side and not use it as much. This will only increase the stiffness and tension in the surrounding muscles and add to your discomfort.
- Continue to use your arm in pain-free ways throughout the day. The best way is to use it for easy tasks like turning a page in your book, picking up your keys, or taking out your credit card.
- Keep tasks within an easy arm's reach and avoid long levers:
 - Carry loads close to your body
 - Avoid reaching far away for items by getting close to what you need
- Avoid repetitive overhead motions

PAIN MANAGEMENT

- Avoid compensating movements. The most common one is hiking your shoulder up to reach items overhead. This will create more tension and discomfort in the muscles around your shoulder
- Try heat or cold to ease the pain. This is 100% your choice - pick the one that feels better for you.



POSTURE

- Your posture plays a huge role in where your shoulder is positioned and as a result, how much pain you experience while at rest.
- Don't let your shoulder poke forward - this means **no slouching**.
- If you're resting on the couch or at your desk for a while, support your arm with a cushion/pillow/armrest so that it's in a neutral, stable position.
- Use the "fish hook" rule - imagine there's a fish hook pulling you up by your sternum.

SLEEP

- It is normal to feel more pain or discomfort at night while trying to fall asleep.
- If you're a **back sleeper**: place a rolled up tea towel under your elbow. This will put your shoulder in a more neutral position.
- If you're a **side sleeper**: sleep on your unaffected side and hug a pillow with your injured arm so that it is comfortably supported.
- DO NOT tuck the injured arm under your pillow.

EXERCISE

- Do your exercises in **small, but frequent** bouts.
 - Your shoulder is like a young puppy - it wants to get exercised regularly, but gets tired quickly.
 - This means it's better to do your exercises 3 times per day for 5-10 minutes, rather than doing just one session for 30 minutes.
- Use pain as a general guide.
 - It's okay to feel mild discomfort while performing your exercises (think 3-4/10 on an imaginary pain scale) but it shouldn't feel excruciating.
 - It's normal to feel a bit of soreness afterwards for a couple of hours but it shouldn't leave you in agony for days.

