Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Acromioclavicular (ACJ) sprain

Version number: **1**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

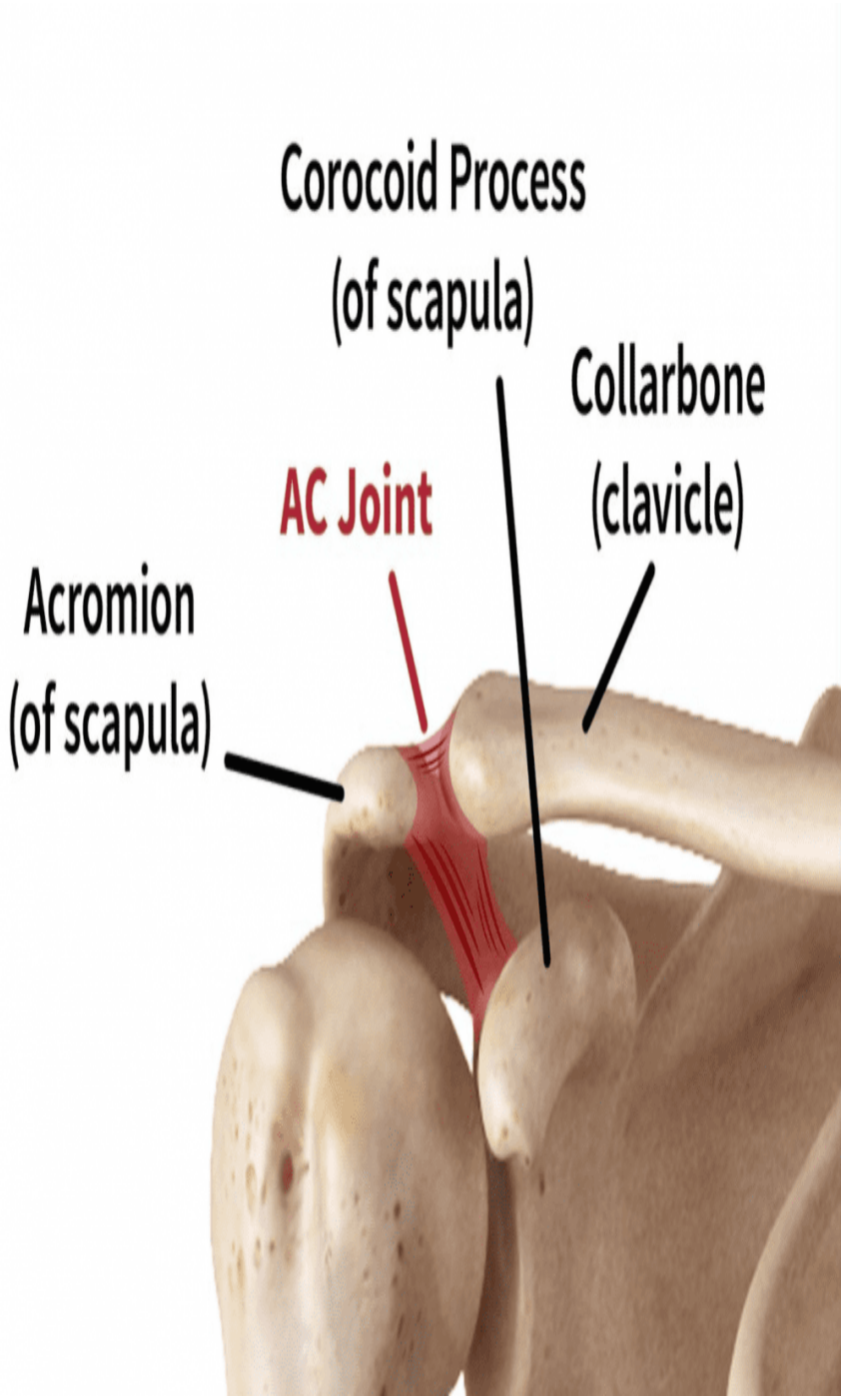
Patient Information

Trauma & Orthopaedics

- Author ID: VL
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- Date Produced: April 2024
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Introduction

You have had an overstretching or small tear in the ligament that attaches your collarbone to the tip of your shoulder blade (scapula). This injury is common, and your shoulder is stable. No surgery is needed.



Injury recovery (Day 1 to 3)

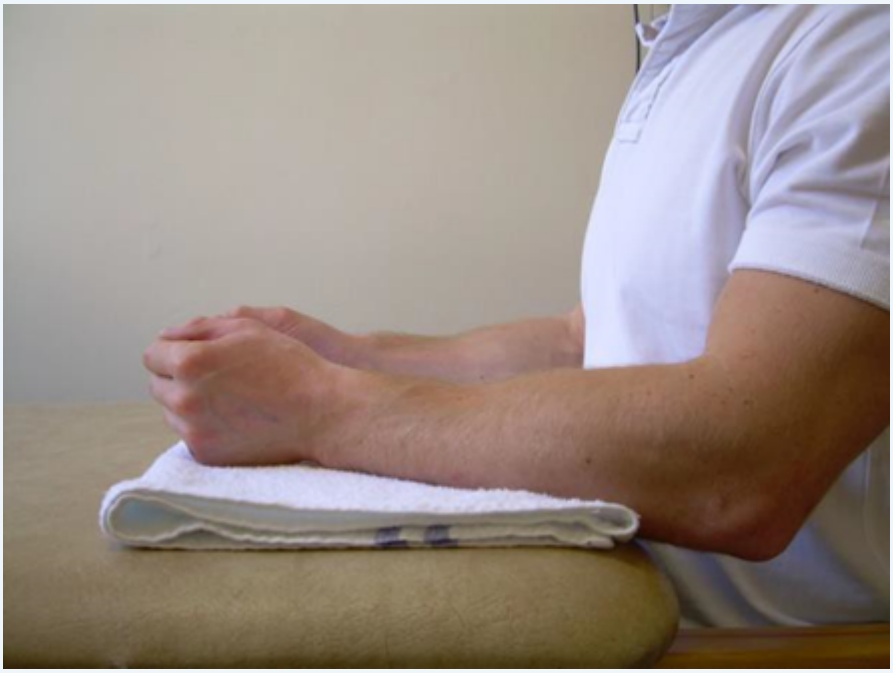
- Protect by wearing sling as pain dictates, this will take the strain off your shoulder for the first few days
- Partial rest is recommended for the first few days, but you should move your elbow and wrist to avoid stiffness
- A bag of ice/frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel can be applied for 5-10 minutes every 2 hours to help reduce pain and swelling*
- Start to exercise the shoulder as soon as you can to prevent stiffness

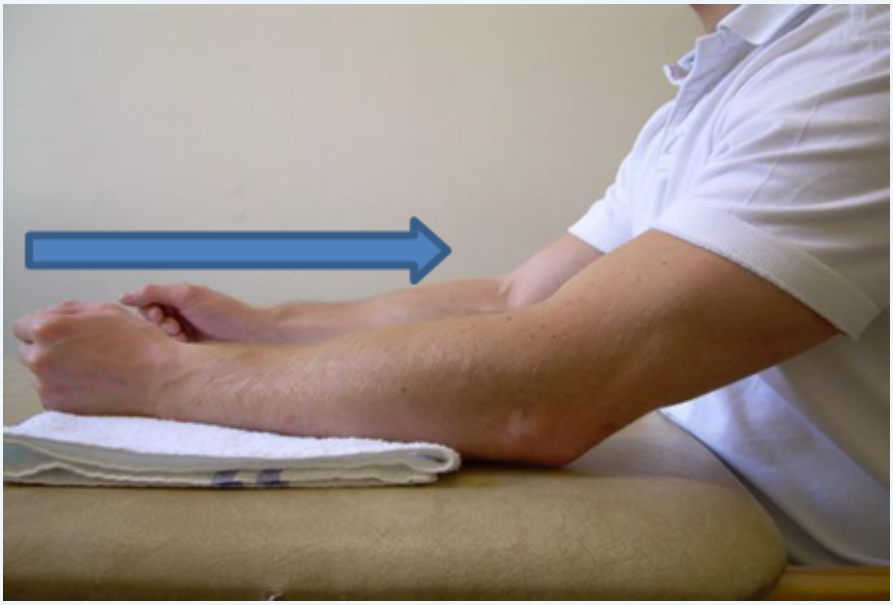
***Warning:** risk of ice burn, do not leave ice on for longer than instructed OR if skin sensation is compromised.

Exercise

Aim to get the shoulder moving and stop using the sling. Get back to a normal routine as soon as pain allows. Maybe start with the Table slides exercise below. For severe sprains you will be advised to see a Physiotherapist.

Table Slides

	• Sit at a table hen work top • Rest your ha ith your palm
	• Watching yo ide the towe h hands • Only go forw bow is movi • Pause



- Return by sl
  nd hands ba
  ease
- As you feel
  able, when y
  elbows back
  you can lear
  wards over y
  This will help
  rther

Risks

You may be left with a permanent pain-free lump on top of your shoulder. This is a common side effect of this injury but should not affect your daily activities.

Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution has been taken in sele cting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding your injury, or whether you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your General Practitioner (GP) or Physiotherapist before beginning any exercises in this leaflet.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this disc omfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and does not have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown in this leaflet are designed to be used as a guide and a point of refer ence; they can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your Physiotherapist

Frequently asked questions

Driving

You must not drive with a sling on. It is your own responsibility. You are allowed to drive when:

- You can safely control the car
- You can use the steering wheel/gear stick safely
- You can perform an emergency stop

Work

This depends on your individual situation. You can return to work when you feel able to do your job. Consider a phased return where needed / possible.

Sports

You should not play sport until pain-free and have full movement in your shoulder.

Further Advice

If you have any concerns regarding your shoulder, contact:

Fracture Clinic Helpline 01942 822595

Please leave a message with name, telephone number and brief description of reason for call. We will aim to call you back within 24hours Monday to Friday 8.30am until 5pm (please note it will be Monday if you call over the weekend).

If you have any urgent concerns out of hours, please call 111.

Adult MSK Physiotherapy Self-Referral

If you are struggling to regain your movement or get back to normal activities, you can self-refer to Physiotherapy. A referral form can be found on this webpage:

https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/adult-msk-physiotherapy-self-referral



Please scan the QR Code to access the website.

Telephone Numbers:

Boston House Health Centre Telephone 0300 707 1113

Leigh Infirmary Telephone 0300 707 1597 / 0300 707 1595

Platt Bridge Health Centre Telephone 0300 707 1772



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