Hands, Splints, Upper Limbs
Musculoskeletal and Sports Physiotherapy
Complex and Persistent Pain

Suite 15 Murdoch Medical Clinic
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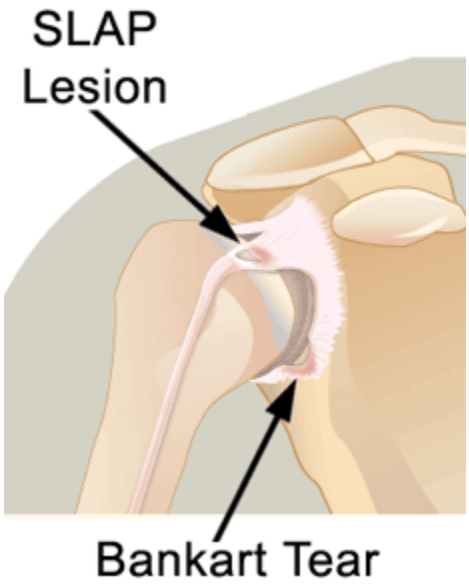
Arthroscopic Shoulder Stabilisation surgery

Post-operative rehabilitation program

This is keyhole surgery, usually performed under a combination of general anaesthetic and a nerve block. It may be performed as a day procedure, but more commonly patients remain in hospital overnight to ensure they are comfortable.

Usually, the cartilage of the shoulder (labrum) acts like a suction cap, increasing the strength and stability of the ball and socket-like shoulder joint. This cartilage can be damaged from trauma or spontaneous dislocations, and are often the result of sporting accidents.

The operation involves reattachment and tightening of the torn labrum and ligaments of the shoulder (see picture). This is usually done using sutures and small bone anchors.



An arthroscope is used to view and guide the surgery performed through the second incision. If necessary, the surgeon may decide to perform an open repair through a larger incision.

After the surgical repair is completed, the incisions are sutured and dressed, and the arm is placed in a sling to protect the repair. You may require this sling for 4-6 weeks, depending on your specific injury. The sling needs to be used at all times (except during exercise) during this period, unless advised otherwise by your surgeon or physiotherapist. Gentle exercises are started the day after your operation, guided by your physiotherapist.

Call Flex Physiotherapy 9332 6422 for further information.

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Post-operative Rehabilitation Guidelines

The recovery process is individual, and varies considerably with regards to pain, stiffness, and progression back to normal function. This difference in recovery time can be up to 6-12 weeks, depending on your injury, age, job and other medical conditions.

Time frame	Expected issues	Your role
0-2 weeks	Unable to use arm fully Pain at rest Limited ability to work	Sling use Passive shoulder exercises Medications and ice
2-6 weeks	Limited shoulder movement Difficulty using arm Pain with movement Stiffness and weakness	Reducing sling use Active/assisted shoulder movement Early strengthening exercises Medications
6-12 weeks	Normal shoulder movement Difficulty with overhead activities Occasional pain with end-range, fast, or heavy activities. Weakness < stiffness	No sling use Strengthening exercises Shoulder stability exercises Return to light to moderate activity
3 months +	Occasional discomfort with sport or job-specific movements Early fatigue during activities	Strength and endurance exercises Sport-specific training Return to full work duties Gradual return to sport

Exercises:

- After your shoulder operation it is very important to perform the exercises on the following pages to regain your mobility over the first 2-6 weeks.
- **Don't lift your arm without assistance for 2-6 weeks, as per advice from your surgeon and physiotherapist, otherwise the repair can be compromised.**
- Only perform exercises taught to you by your physiotherapist or surgeon.
- Don't use the muscles in the operated shoulder to raise the arm away from your side, even in the sling.
- Exercises should be performed 3-5 times a day. It may be helpful to take pain medication 30-40 minutes prior to exercise (as prescribed by your doctor).

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Swelling

- You may have considerable swelling around your shoulder after surgery.
- **Apply ice for a maximum of 20 minutes following exercises or as required.**
- Ice (crushed, cubes, frozen peas, gel pack etc.) should be wrapped in a towel and placed directly on the shoulder, over the waterproof dressing.

Pain

- Immediately after your surgery, pain at rest and with movement is expected.
- Take your medication and use ice regularly to keep your pain mild-moderate (<4/10).
- Many people develop pain around the neck, upper back and down the arm which is normal, but if you are concerned please call your physiotherapist.
- If you develop worsening tingling or numbness, please call your physiotherapist.

Sling

- The sling is for protection for the first 2-6 weeks after the operation.
- Ensure your **elbow is in the corner of the sling**, with your **hand well-supported** inside the sling.
- Your arm should rest comfortably in the sling, with the entire weight of the arm supported and with your hand at the level of your chest.
- Wear the sling both day and night (including sleeping).
- **Only** remove the sling for showering, and when doing the prescribed exercises.

Driving

- **No driving for 2-4 weeks** to ensure the repair site heals well.
- Await instructions from your surgeon or physiotherapist to commence driving.

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Start these exercises (pages 4-6) <u>the day</u> after your operation

Elbow straightening

- Remove your arm from the sling.
- Raise your hand towards your shoulder.
- If your hand throbs, keep attempting as many as you can, as long as it is not painful.

At least 3 times per day, 10 repetitions

Neck mobility

- Look up/down, turn side to side, and tilt your head in both directions

5 repetitions, 3 times per day

If you have neck problems before your surgery, please ask your physiotherapist about alternative exercises you should do.

Gripping

- Curl your fingers around a stress ball, a pair of rolled up socks, or a sponge

Squeeze 20-30 times, 3 times per day

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Rehabilitation Precautions

Don't allow your arm to lift or turn outwards excessively to the side. These movements may compromise your repair in the early stages of rehabilitation.

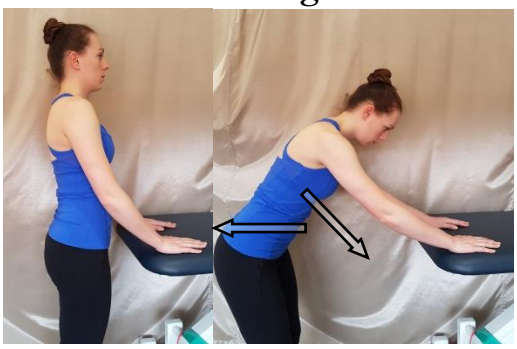
Passive exercises – supported movement with assistance

Pendular exercises

- Hold your elbow with the other hand.
- Bend forward at the hips.
- Using your good arm, gently roll your arm backwards and forwards, side to side, and in circles.

3 times per day, 10 repetitions

Arm elevation using table



- Stand in front of a table.
- Rest your hand on the table in front of you.
- Step backwards away from the table, keeping your shoulder relaxed until a stretch is felt.
- Return to upright.

3 times per day, 10 repetitions

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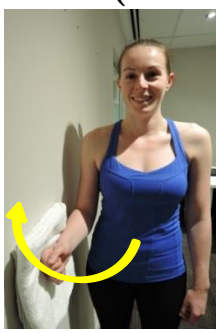
Scapula retraction

- In sitting or standing, draw your shoulders down and back.
- Hold 2-3 seconds, then relax and slump your shoulders.

Perform 5 times per day, 10 repetitions.

Active exercises – unsupported movement

Turning outwards (Muscle holds)



- Ensure your arm stays at your side, not touching the wall.
- Place your hand against the wall.
- Turn your arm outwards against your hand.

Hold 10 seconds, 5 repetitions.

Pushing sideways (Muscle holds)

- Arm slightly elevated from side.
- Ensure your elbow is in contact with the wall.
- Push up and outwards against that wall, as if you were lifting your arm to the side.

Hold 10 seconds, 5 repetitions.