

ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

Dislocated Shoulders Are Common Orthopaedic Injuries

A dislocated shoulder is one of the three most common orthopaedic emergencies. Dislocation usually happens during contact sports such as football or hockey. The shoulder blade and humerus, or upper arm, form a ball and socket-type of joint. Dislocation occurs when the humeral head pops out of the socket.

Most of the time, dislocation is anterior, meaning the head of the humerus slips forward out of the joint. Occasionally, the humerus slips backwards out of the joint, which is a posterior dislocation.

Dislocation is extremely painful; if you dislocate your shoulder, you will know immediately. You will not be able to move your shoulder without making the pain worse. The doctor will be able to see a noticeable deformity in the joint through the skin. There also may be swelling and bruising around the joint and you may experience numbness in the upper arm and weakness of the muscles around the shoulder. Unfortunately, once a shoulder has been dislocated, there is a high chance for reoccurrence.

Treatment of a dislocated shoulder involves "popping" the humeral head back into the socket. Depending on the amount of pain and swelling, your doctor may give pain medicine and muscle relaxants to keep you comfortable while manipulating your shoulder bones back into the proper position. An X-ray of your shoulder joint will also help to assess the damage.

Once the shoulder is back in place, the doctor will immobilize it with a sling for several weeks. Gently exercising the elbow, wrist, and fingers during this time will help maintain your range of motion and prevent stiff joints.

Active rehabilitation starts within a couple of days, but you will need to avoid overhead arm movement and sporting activities for at least six weeks.

Since re-injury is common after an initial dislocation, your doctor will strongly recommend that you continue the daily muscle-strengthening exercises targeting the muscles surrounding the humeral head to help prevent future problems.



Scott T. Glaeser, MD

Sheboygan Orthopaedic Associates
Medical Arts—Superior Avenue
2920 Superior Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920/458-3791



St. Nicholas Hospital

3100 Superior Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920/459-8300

www.stnicholashospital.org

An Affiliate of Hospital Sisters Health System

In Partnership With

PHYSICIANS'
HEALTH NETWORK