

# ST. NICHOLAS HOSPITAL HEALTHSOURCE

## Treating Dislocations

When you apply force on a ligament – the flexible bands of fibrous tissue that connect various bones and cartilage – allowing the ends of two connected bones to separate, a dislocation occurs. The most commonly dislocated joint in the body is the shoulder, but dislocations can happen in many other places in the body, including the hip, elbow, and knee.

The most common symptoms of a dislocation include pain and swelling in the injured area; difficulty using or moving the injured area in a normal manner; deformity of the dislocated area; and warmth, bruising, or redness in the injured area. Seek medical attention if you suspect a dislocation since these symptoms may mirror other medical conditions.

Diagnosis of a dislocation includes a thorough physical examination by a physician as well as other diagnostic procedures including x-rays and MRIs.

Upon diagnosis, your doctor will determine the treatment based on the extent and type of injury. Initial treatment may include rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Dislocations may spontaneously go back into place. In some cases, your doctor may need to manipulate the joint into a proper position so it will heal correctly. You may be sedated for this procedure, both for your comfort, and so the muscles around the dislocated joint relax, allowing the joint to go back into place more easily.

While healing from a dislocation, your doctor may recommend restricting activities, using crutches or a wheelchair to rest the affected area, and physical therapy to stretch and strengthen the injured muscles, ligaments, and tendons.

By adhering to activity restrictions and engaging in stretching and strengthening techniques, you enhance your healing process, and prevent a re-injury from occurring.



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