

Scapula (Shoulder Blade) Injuries: a Guide for Patients

This leaflet is for anybody who has sustained injuries to their scapula. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What is a scapula injury and why have I got it?

Injuries to the scapula include fractures, severe bruising and / or possible tendon injuries. This generally occurs following a high impact trauma such as falling from a height, a road traffic accident, cycling accident or high impact sports.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Scapula injuries can be very painful but you can expect this discomfort to improve over a period of three to six weeks, the more severe the injury the longer it may take to subside. You may have swelling or bruising and may have difficulty moving the affected arm.

You may also notice, with some more severe injuries, a difference in how your injured scapula looks compared to your uninjured side. This may improve in time, but possibly will not return to its original shape.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

If you are admitted to St George's Hospital with a traumatic mechanism of injury you will have a Computed Tomography (CT) scan. This scan will identify your fracture. You would need further investigations if there is a suspected nerve or muscle tendon injury because of your scapula fracture.

What treatments are available?

Scapula injuries are managed differently depending on the severity. Surgery to fix a broken scapula is rare and for most people the injury heals on its own over a period of weeks with the use of a sling and gentle exercises / movement.

What can I do to help my recovery?

During your admission to St. George's Hospital you will be provided with advice and guided on appropriate exercises. You should complete the exercises daily to help restore full range of movement. Your physiotherapist / occupational therapist will provide advice on managing daily activities as you might need to temporarily modify these. Ensure your pain is well-controlled by taking regular painkillers.

Medical evidence suggests that smoking prolongs fracture healing time. Stopping smoking during the healing phase of your fracture will help ensure optimal recovery from this injury. For advice on smoking cessation and local support available, please refer to [Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk) or discuss this with your GP.

Useful sources of information

[Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your rehabilitation after your scapula injury, please contact the Trauma & Orthopaedics Therapy Department on 020 8725 0985 (Monday to Friday, 08:30am to 4:30pm).

Out of hours, please contact St George's Hospital switchboard for any nursing or medical queries: **020 8672 1255**.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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