

# Top Tips For Shoulder Pain

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## A Note About The Shoulder

*Unlike any other joint, the shoulder has a vast range of movement. Mechanically it is a hypermobile joint. When things go wrong its hypermobility can become a source of instability. The shoulder has to perform up to 3 functions: stabilise the ball and socket, move the arm into place and withstand heavy forces, such as lifting, pulling, pushing etc.*

*Through leverage, these forces are compounded when the arm is stretched out in any direction. This induces an even higher level of strain, deep into the heart of the shoulder. The shoulder girdle itself is suspended from, and attached to the neck as well as other areas. So forces can pass from the arm in to the shoulder, the shoulder blade and into the neck.*

*All these factors can affect healing and cause arm pain, neck pain and of course more shoulder pain.*

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## Arm Position

Try and keep arm movements in front of you close to your stomach area and well below shoulder level. The shoulder joint is most secure and stable in this area.

When the arm is moved away from the stomach area, that it passes above shoulder level either in front of you, to the side or behind you, the shoulder suffers. This will cause further forces to pass through the injured shoulder, behind the shoulder blade or into the neck.

## Examples

So for example loading a dishwasher at arm's length or loading it from your side is more risky than getting closer to it and loading it in the stomach midline. Lifting a jug or kettle close to your stomach area, rather than reaching out is good. Also avoid reaching behind you, ie to put on a coat, reaching to the back seat of a car, reaching forward to paint a wall etc.

A photograph showing a person's arm holding a large glass pitcher filled with yellow lemonade and ice. The person is wearing a dark grey short-sleeved shirt and a colorful beaded bracelet. The text 'Hold Close To Stomach With Good Arm' is overlaid on the image.

Hold Close To  
Stomach With  
Good Arm

## Clothing

Try to wear clothing with buttons rather than pullovers. Taking clothes over your head will require your arm to go above shoulder height, which can hurt the shoulder.

With shirts, cardigans and coats put the sore arm in first. When removing clothing take sore arm out last.

## Muscle Guarding

Try to avoid sudden unguarded movements, such as suddenly reaching out.

It may be helpful to brace yourself before doing any action. By thinking about what you are about to do, your brain sends a signal to the muscles to "take up the slack". This can help protect the shoulder during the impending shoulder action.

## Exercises

Exercising can cause more injury quite easily, so always take advice. When exercising keeping the arm below the level of the shoulder. We recommend exercise bands, as the force builds up gradually. Pushing exercises cause the most strain, so avoid these at to begin with. Pulling exercises are safer.

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## Sleeping

Avoid lying on the shoulder. When you lie on the injury it can cause more pressure to develop. This means more inflammation, muscle spasm and more pain. Lying on the injury also can increase the round shoulder effect, thereby causing more pull on other muscles which may be trying to heal. Sloppy posture causes round-shoulders which is not good for shoulder healing.

Try to avoid sleeping with the arm thrown over the head. It can give relief in some cases, but over time will cause muscle shortening as the ball and socket move upward and near the face.

You may find it helpful to lie on your good side and hug a big pillow. This is the sleeping position we recommend as it keeps pressure off the injured shoulder and helps the shoulder joint to "breathe". When you need to change sleeping position lying on your back is best.



Sleep on the good shoulder - hug a pillow if needed

## Resources - click image

### Video 1 - Top Tips on caring for shoulder



### Video 2 - Understanding shoulder pain



### Applying Heat vs Cold (PDF)



### Paracetamol vs Ibuprofen (PDF)

