

What is my diagnosis?

You have injured the joint at the end of the collarbone called the **acromioclavicular joint (or “AC joint” for short)**.

The type of injury you have suffered is painful but most often heals **without the need for surgery**. You should have been provided with a sling (to support your arm)



What happens next?

- Your X-rays and notes will be checked by a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon to ensure it will heal by itself

If nothing further is needed, we will not contact you

- Occasionally you will receive a telephone consultation or fracture clinic appointment.
- Please make sure the Emergency Department/Minor Injury Unit reception have your mobile and home phone numbers.

Key points

- An injured AC joint is sore, and you may need painkillers
- The sling is to provide comfort, but you do not need to keep the shoulder completely still
- The sling can be removed when you are dressing, washing or sitting down
- Stop using the sling altogether once the pain begins to settle
- Shoulder movements will **not cause any harm** and will not **slow your recovery**

What can I expect during my recovery?

- The pain begins to settle around **1 to 2 weeks** after injury
- The injury will heal over the course of **6 to 12 weeks**
- The bump at the end of the collar bone will remain but does not affect function
- Most people return to desk work by **2 weeks**, but returning to manual work may not be possible for **4 to 8 weeks** depending on your symptoms.
- There is **no specific time you can drive again**. It is **illegal** to drive when wearing a sling, splint, cast, or moonboot. As you recover, it is your legal responsibility to be certain before you return to driving that you are able to control your vehicle normally and safely.

Key exercises (three times a day)

Once the pain has improved all movements are allowed. You cannot delay healing or harm yourself by doing gentle movements of the shoulder.

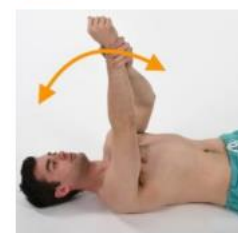
Arm pendulums

Remove the sling and gently swing your arm back and forth like the pendulum of a grandfather clock. Add side to side movements and eventually move the hand in a circle.



Assisted arm raises

Lying flat, hold the wrist of the injured side with your good hand. Raise your arms together until you feel discomfort then come back down. Repeat 10 times, and raise it further as your pain improves.



Arm rotation

Lying flat, hold a walking stick (gold club, broom, etc) between both hands. Keep the elbow of the injured shoulder tucked in by your side (red arrow) then use the good arm to push the stick and rotate the injured side until you feel a slight stretch. Repeat 10 times.



Get in touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email if you have any queries about your injury:

traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Helpline Monday-Friday (8am – 4pm): 0131 242 3410

Urgent issues

Please call the department where you were initially seen about your injury:

- **RIE Minor Injuries Unit:** 0131 242 3942 (8am – midnight, if after midnight contact RIE Emergency Department 0131 242 1300)
- **WGH Minor Injuries Clinic:** 0131 537 3468 (9am – 8.30pm)
- **SJH Emergency Department:** 01506 523 011 (24 hours)