

PATIENT
INFORMATION
LEAFLET

Osteoarthritis of the shoulder

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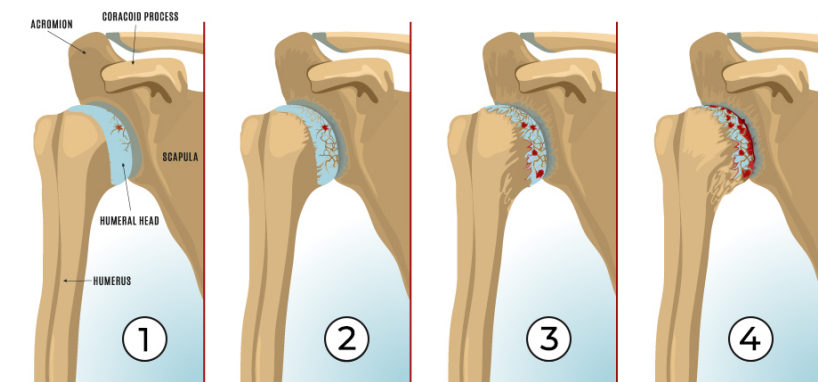
Introduction

Osteoarthritis is a common condition which can affect any joint. When it affects the shoulder it may be in either the main joint (the glenohumeral) or the smaller joint (the acromioclavicular joint) where the top of your shoulder blade meets your collarbone.

Osteoarthritis may result from previous injuries or abnormal stresses. The cartilage becomes thinner and spurs of extra bone (osteophytes) may form which alter the shape of your joint and affect how it moves.

Certain movements become difficult, especially reaching behind the back, behind the head and reaching up. The shoulder may be painful to lie on and disturb your sleep.

Shoulder osteoarthritis stages



Causes of a Shoulder Osteoarthritis

- Obesity
- Previous joint injury/surgery
- Occupation/Sport: Shoulder issues are more prevalent with people who use their arms above shoulder height in a repetitive or sustained way, especially when heavier loads are involved.

Symptoms of Shoulder Osteoarthritis

Some people will never get symptoms with shoulder osteoarthritis. Pain, stiffness, and limitation in full movement of the joint are the most common symptoms. Symptoms tend to get worse after activity. Swelling and inflammation of an affected joint can sometimes occur. An affected joint tends to look a little larger than normal. This is due to overgrowth of the bone next to damaged cartilage. If you have bad OA that affects your shoulder, you may have difficulty in putting your clothes on, and using the arm above shoulder height.

Diagnosis of Shoulder Osteoarthritis

An X ray may be requested to confirm osteoarthritis of the shoulder. However, the severity of arthritis seen on X-ray does not correlate well with symptoms. In other words, An X-ray may show mild symptoms whilst the patient complains of severe symptoms, and vice versa.

Self management of Shoulder Osteoarthritis

Treatment will depend on your level of pain and how much your range of movement is affected.

Weight loss

If you are overweight you are putting extra load through your hip. This will be contributing to your arthritis. Therefore, losing weight will improve your symptoms.

Painkillers

Various over the counter pain killers are available for the management of pain. It is important to note these will not cure the arthritis, only numb the pain. It is therefore important to continue with all other aspects of treatment.

Exercises for Shoulder Osteoarthritis

Exercise 1: Shoulder Pendulum Exercises



- Start by resting your non-affected hand on a stable object for balance.
- Slightly bend forward, with your affected arm hanging in front of body towards the floor. Slowly start swinging your arm forward/sideways/in circles.
- Your arm should be fully relaxed when doing this exercise.

Exercise 2: Seated Shoulder External Rotation with Stick



- While standing or sitting on a chair, hold a stick with your unaffected arm.
- Place a small rolled up towel between the elbow of your affected arm and the side of your body; bend your elbow to 90 degrees.
- Use the stick to gently push into the hand of the injured arm.
- Your arm should slowly rotate outward, while maintaining a 90 degree angle at the elbow, keeping it on the towel.
- Rotate the arm until a stretch is felt.

Exercise 3: Hand Behind Back Stretch



- Put your affected arm behind your back as far as able.
- Grab it with your unaffected hand and gentle pull it upwards.

Exercise 4: Posterior Shoulder Stretch



- Place the hand of the affected arm to the opposite shoulder.
- Grab your affected elbow with your unaffected hand.
- Gently pull the elbow towards the shoulder until a stretch is felt in the shoulder.

Exercise 5: Wall Push Up



- Standing at a wall, place your arms out in front of you, with your elbows straight, so that your hands just reach the wall.
- Next, bend your elbows slowly to bring your chest closer to the wall.
- Keep your feet flat on the ground the entire time.

What next?

If you are still experiencing symptoms despite following the above advice, it is important you seek advice from your GP. Your GP may decide to refer you to the musculoskeletal clinic or to a physiotherapist.

If the pain is severe and tablets do not help an injection of corticosteroid into the shoulder joint or surrounding tissue may be helpful. You may have an x-ray to see if there is any arthritis in the joint.