



Sandwell and West Birmingham
NHS Trust

Wearing a sling following shoulder surgery

Information and advice for patients

Physiotherapy

When you wake up after your operation you may be wearing a sling. You will need to wear your sling:

- All day and night for _____ days/weeks. Remove it for washing and exercises only.
- For comfort only.

What are the benefits of wearing the sling?

Wearing a sling will help to protect and rest your arm while the body repairs the shoulder after surgery. It may also help to reduce your pain. The specific benefits of wearing the sling will depend on the type of surgery you have had and these will be explained to you.

What are the risks of wearing the sling?

Wearing a sling continually can increase the risk of stiffness and reduced movement occurring at the shoulder and elbow. You will be advised by a physiotherapist how to reduce the chance of stiffness occurring by completing daily exercises.

What are the risks of not wearing the sling?

If you are advised to wear a sling and choose not to wear it, your shoulder may not recover properly. As a result of this, the function of your shoulder may not improve and any pain you may have may not reduce after it has healed and you have had rehabilitation.

Are there any alternatives to wearing the sling?

There are no alternatives to using a sling for protection and comfort after your operation.

Sleeping after your shoulder surgery

Sleeping can be uncomfortable for the first few weeks, particularly if you try to lie on your operated arm. We recommend you lie on your back or the opposite side to your operated arm and use ordinary pillows for comfort and support.

If you are lying on your side:

- Use one pillow slightly folded under your neck for support.
- Fold a pillow in half and place it under your operated arm for support.
- Tuck a pillow along your back to help prevent you rolling onto the operated shoulder during the night.

If you are lying on your back:

- Use a folded pillow to support your neck.
- Place a folded pillow under the elbow of the operated arm to support it.

Personal care

You need to wash under your arm as shown by your physiotherapist. Do not get the sling wet

Follow-up and removing your sling

The consultant will let you know when you are ready to take the sling off.

Returning to your normal activities

Your surgeon and physiotherapist will advise you when you can return to your daily and leisure activities, such as driving and work.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the orthopaedic physiotherapist by telephoning
0121 507 2916

Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- *Shoulderdoc* (2020) Available at: <https://www.shoulderdoc.co.uk/> (Accessed: 7 September 2023)
- *Derby shoulder unit* (2015) Available at: <http://derbyshoulderunit.co.uk/> (Accessed: 7 September 2023)

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