

Acromioclavicular Joint (ACJ) Sprain

Fact Sheet

Information contained in this fact sheet is a guideline for care only. Please consult with your doctor or health professional to make sure that this information is right for you.

Your fracture

You have sprained the acromioclavicular joint (ACJ) in your shoulder, between your clavicle and your scapula (shoulder blade).

Your injury has been assessed as either Grade 1 or 2 and not requiring specialist orthopaedic care. You will likely make a good recovery.

A **Grade 1** sprain/injury involves only minimal trauma to the ligament and no tear.

A **Grade 2** sprain/injury is more complex; it involves tears of multiple ligaments.

Treatment

For ACJ sprains you will be placed in a sling or "collar and cuff" for approximately:

- **Grade 1 injury:** 1 – 2 weeks
- **Grade 2 injury:** 2 – 6 weeks.

For the first 48 – 72 hours post-injury:

- **Rest**
- Use regular **pain relief** such as paracetamol
- Apply **ice** in a damp tea towel to the area for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours when awake.

You may find it more comfortable to sleep sitting upright for 2 – 3 days following the injury.

Healing Timeframe

Grade 1 injury

- The ACJ may be painful for 1 – 2 weeks and you should recover full motion of the shoulder/arm within 4 weeks
- If after 4 weeks your pain has worsened or you have difficulty moving your shoulder/arm, please see your GP for advice.
- Grade 2 injury
- The ACJ may be painful for 4 – 6 weeks and you should recover full motion of the shoulder/arm within 6 – 8 weeks
- If after 6 – 8 weeks your pain has worsened or you have difficulty moving your shoulder/arm, please see your GP for advice.

Getting Back to Normal

- You can remove the sling as pain allows, usually 2 weeks after the injury but sooner if comfortable
- Make sure to keep your unaffected joints, such as your wrist, hand and fingers, moving freely
- Gradually resume daily activities as pain allows
- A "bump" may form over the injured ACJ. This might disappear after several weeks, but in some cases, a small bump might be a permanent feature. This won't affect your function nor require any treatment.

Pain Relief and Comfort

Regular pain relief such as paracetamol can be used.

When can I...?

Play sport	Grade 1: After 3 weeks
	Grade 2: After 6-8 weeks
Lift heavy items	Grade 1: After 3 weeks
	Grade 2: After 6-8 weeks
Return to work	Consult your doctor
Drive	Consult your doctor

The above timeframes are a guide only and do not apply to all ACJ Sprains.

Worries or concerns

For any immediate concerns or questions regarding your injury please contact:

- Your General Practitioner (GP).
They are able to speak directly to an Orthopaedic team at Redcliffe Hospital or Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital if required.
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for health advice, triage and referral from a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH provides access to interpreting services for callers not confident with English.

In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (000).

