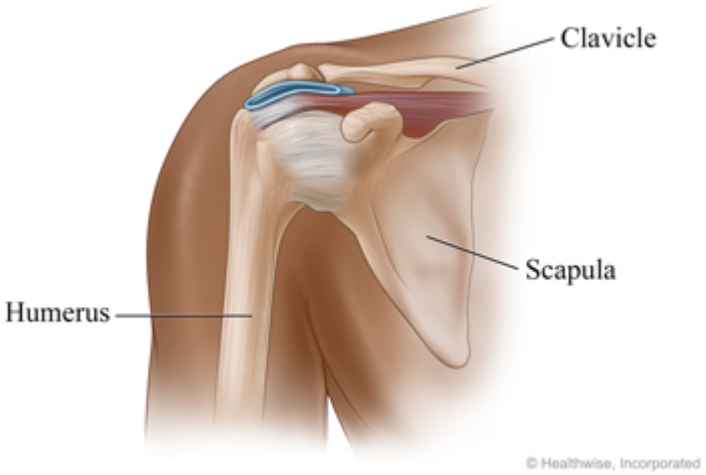
Shoulder Blade Fracture: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

The shoulder blade (scapula) is a triangle-shaped bone in the upper back. It connects to the upper arm bone (humerus) and to the collar bone (clavicle).

Shoulder blade fractures are usually caused by high-impact accidents such as motorcycle or car crashes or very hard falls.

Treatment for these fractures is usually a sling or other device that supports the shoulder while the bone heals.

Most fractures heal completely in about six weeks, but it can take six months to a year for your shoulder motion to return to normal. Sometimes, full motion doesn't return. Some types of shoulder blade fractures may need surgery.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, get medical treatment right away.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Wear the sling for as long as your doctor tells you to. You may take off the sling when you bathe. When the sling is off, avoid arm positions or motions that cause or increase pain.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your shoulder for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.

- After a few days, put your fingers, wrist, and elbow through their full range of motion several times a day. This will keep them from getting stiff. You may get instructions on rehabilitation exercises you can do when your shoulder starts to heal.
- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
    - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
    - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are having severe trouble breathing.
- You have chest pain.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse symptoms in your arm. Symptoms may include:
    - Numbness or tingling.
    - Weakness.
    - Pain.
    - New or worse swelling.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **D119** in the search box to learn more about **"Shoulder Blade Fracture: Care Instructions".**

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