

# Physiotherapy: Shoulder Impingement (Subacromial Impingement Syndrome)

## Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Community & Therapy Services

**This leaflet has been designed to  
give you an overview of this  
condition and the role of  
physiotherapy in its management.**

# Information for patients and visitors

---

## Introduction

You have been referred to physiotherapy to help you manage your shoulder pain believed to be caused by impingement. This leaflet will briefly describe this condition, treatment options and role of physiotherapy.

## What is shoulder impingement?

It is the most commonly diagnosed shoulder condition, which causes pain at the side of the shoulder. This often occurs with movements involving raising the arm, twisting the arm (such as putting on a jacket or shirt), overhead activity and can often cause an arc of pain when raising or lowering the arm.

It can disturb your sleep, especially when laying on your shoulder.

It is generally believed the soft tissues get caught or pinched when they are inflamed as seen below.



Shoulder impingement can be called other things such as Subacromial Impingement Syndrome, Trapped Tendons, Tendonitis and Bursitis.

## What causes shoulder impingement?

There are many causes of shoulder impingement and why different people of different ages can get this pain. These may include:

- Genetics and condition of the tendons
- Activities (repetitive overhead activity, sports, sudden strain, falls)
- Stiffness or hypermobility of the shoulder joint
- Postural habits
- Muscle weakness or imbalance
- Strain or tears within the tendons
- Calcium deposits in the tendons (calcific tendonitis)

Further detailed information can be provided on the shoulder anatomy, rotator cuff and its function and how these specifically affect you by your physiotherapist. Additionally, more detail can be found on the following web pages or links:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/impingement-syndrome/Pages/Impingement-syndrome.aspx>

<http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/shoulder-pain/specific-conditions.aspx>

<https://www.shoulderdoc.co.uk/section/9>

# Information for patients and visitors

---

## Treatment Options:

These are divided into Conservative and Surgical Options.

### Conservative Management

- Rest, ice and activity modification
- Medications (pain killers and anti-inflammatories)
- Physiotherapy
- Injections

### Surgical Management

- This is done if conservative management has not been successful
- Depending on the cause of the problem the surgeon's recommendations could include:
  - Subacromial Decompression - an Arthroscopic (key hole) or Open procedure
  - Removal of Calcium Deposits
  - Acromioclavicular joint excision
  - Tendon Repair if tear found

### Physiotherapy

Following your assessment, the physiotherapist will discuss your condition and set agreed goals with you. Additional treatment may be on a one to one basis, or as part of a group or even by telephone consultation if appropriate.

The key focus of Physiotherapy management is to work on good posture, good shoulder blade positioning and strengthening of the weakened rotator cuff muscle but may include the following:

- Manual therapy techniques including specific shoulder joint or soft tissue mobilisation and taping
- Advice about stopping specific activity or modification of activities
- Advice about use of ice or heat
- Specific postural exercises
- Stretching, movement and strengthening exercises around the shoulder girdle
- Lower kinetic chain exercises (activities to strengthen core and leg muscles to assist upper limb function)
- Education on prevention and self-management techniques

Some physiotherapists are also qualified to provide shoulder injections. These reduce inflammation and control the pain, allowing the rotator cuff muscles a chance to recover and improve with the exercise.

### Contact Details for Further Information

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy Department, Diana Princess of Wales Hospital

Phone number: 01472 875276

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy Department, Scunthorpe General Hospital

Phone number: 01724 290010

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy Department, Goole and District Hospital

Phone number: 01724 290019

# Information for patients and visitors

---

## Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

### For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

### For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

[nlq-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlq-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

## Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

**Diana Princess of Wales Hospital**  
Scartho Road  
Grimsby  
DN33 2BA  
01472 874111

**Scunthorpe General Hospital**  
Cliff Gardens  
Scunthorpe  
DN15 7BH  
01724 282282

**Goole & District Hospital**  
Woodland Avenue  
Goole  
DN14 6RX  
01405 720720

[www.nlg.nhs.uk](http://www.nlg.nhs.uk)

Date of issue: February, 2017

Review Period: February, 2020

Author: Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy

IFP-926

© NLGFT 2017

