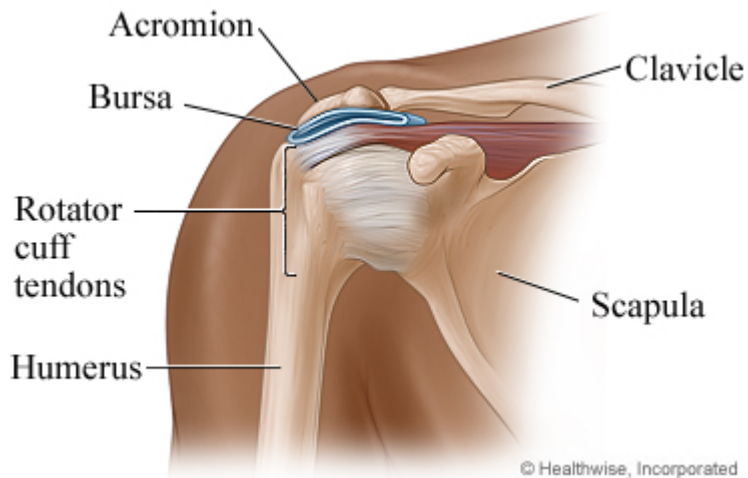


# Shoulder Sprain: Care Instructions



## Your Care Instructions

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A shoulder sprain occurs when you stretch or tear a ligament in your shoulder. Ligaments are tough tissues that connect one bone to another. A sprain can happen during sports, a fall, or projects around the house.

Shoulder sprains usually get better with treatment at home.

**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?

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- Rest and protect your shoulder. Try to stop or reduce any action that causes pain.
- If your doctor gave you a sling or immobilizer, wear it as directed. A sling or immobilizer supports your shoulder and may make you more comfortable.
- 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. Some doctors suggest alternating between hot and cold.
- 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.
- For the first day or two after an injury, avoid things that might increase swelling, such as hot showers, hot tubs, or hot packs.
- After 2 or 3 days, if your swelling is gone, apply a heating pad set on low or a warm cloth to your shoulder. This helps keep your shoulder flexible. Some doctors suggest that you go back and forth between hot and cold. Put a thin cloth between the heating pad and your skin.
- Follow your doctor's or physical therapist's directions for exercises.

- Return to your usual level of activity slowly.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain is worse.
- You cannot move your shoulder.
- Your arm is cool or pale or changes color below the shoulder.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your arm.

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?

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

Enter **U672** in the search box to learn more about "**Shoulder Sprain: Care Instructions**".

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