

Shoulder pain is a common complaint that can affect your ability to perform daily activities, with up to 67% of people experiencing pain in their shoulder in their lifetime. It may result from various causes, including injuries, overuse, or underlying medical conditions. This handout aims to provide you with essential information about shoulder pain and how to manage it effectively.

Types of Shoulder Pain:

- Acute Shoulder Pain: Typically sudden and short-lived, often caused by injuries or strains.
- Chronic Shoulder Pain: Persistent pain lasting for an extended period, greater than 12 weeks, which may be related to underlying conditions.

Common Causes of Shoulder Pain:

- Rotator Cuff Injuries: Tears or strains in the group of muscles and tendons that stabilise the shoulder joint.
- Tendonitis: Inflammation of the tendons due to overuse or injury.
- Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis): Gradual stiffening and loss of shoulder motion.
- Arthritis: Conditions like osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis can affect the shoulder joint.
- Bursitis: Inflammation of the fluid-filled sacs (bursae) that cushion the shoulder.
- Fractures or Dislocations: Trauma or accidents can lead to shoulder fractures or dislocations.
- Nerve Compression: Pinched nerves in the neck or shoulder can cause referred pain.

Symptoms:

- Dull or sharp pain in the shoulder or upper arm
- Limited range of motion
- Muscle weakness
- Swelling or tenderness
- Radiating pain down the arm

Prevention and Management:

- **Exercise:** Strengthening and stretching exercises can help improve shoulder stability and flexibility.
- **Proper Ergonomics:** Maintain good posture and ergonomics when working or using electronic devices.
- **Avoid Overuse:** Take regular breaks during repetitive activities to prevent strain.
- **Rest and Ice:** Rest the shoulder and apply ice to reduce inflammation in case of injury.
- **Heat Therapy:** Heat can help relax shoulder muscles and increase blood flow.
- **Pain Medication:** Over-the-counter pain relievers or prescription medications may be necessary.
- **Posture Correction:** Ensure proper alignment of the spine and shoulders to reduce strain.

When to Seek Professional Help:

If you experience any of the following, it is recommended to consult a healthcare professional:

- Severe or persistent pain
- Inability to move the shoulder
- Signs of infection (redness, warmth, fever)
- Weakness or numbness in the arm

Treatment Options:

- **Physiotherapy:** Individualised exercises and stretches to improve shoulder function.
- **Medications:** Pain relievers, anti-inflammatories, or muscle relaxants as prescribed.
- **Injections:** Corticosteroid injections can reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Surgery:** For severe cases, surgical procedures may be recommended.