

# Shoulder Subluxation

## What is a shoulder subluxation?

A shoulder subluxation is a temporary, partial dislocation of the shoulder joint. The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint. The ball of the upper arm bone is normally held in the socket of the shoulder blade by a group of ligaments, which are strong bands of tissue that connect the bones. In a subluxation, the ball of the upper arm bone slips partially out of the shoulder socket.

## How does it occur?

A shoulder subluxation can be caused by:

- ▶ a fall onto your outstretched arm
- ▶ a direct blow to your shoulder
- ▶ having your arm forced into an awkward position.

If you have had a previous injury or if your shoulder ligaments are naturally loose, you may sublux your shoulder doing simple activities like throwing or putting on a jacket.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a shoulder subluxation include:

- ▶ the feeling that your shoulder has gone "in and out of joint"
- ▶ looseness in your shoulder joint
- ▶ pain, weakness, or numbness in your shoulder or arm.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will talk to you about your symptoms and examine you. Many times the diagnosis of a shoulder subluxation is based on your description of the injury. When your provider examines you, he or she may find that your shoulder is loose and may partially slip out of joint during the exam. Your provider may order x-rays to see if you have had any fractures.

## How is it treated?

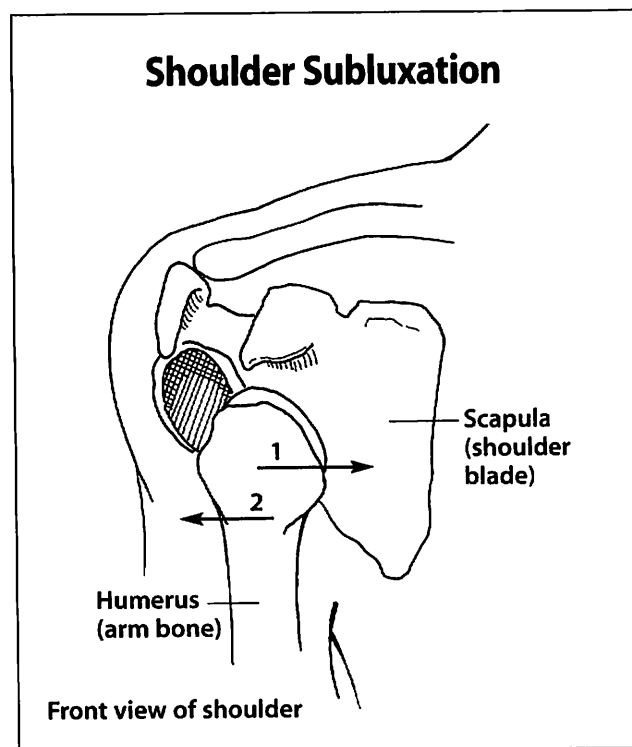
The pain from a shoulder subluxation is treated by:

- ▶ putting ice packs on your shoulder for 20 to 30 minutes 3 to 4 times a day
- ▶ taking anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen
- ▶ avoiding activities that cause pain.

The most important treatment for the shoulder looseness that causes a subluxation is shoulder strengthening exercises. If your shoulder continues to sublux and cause pain and other symptoms, you may need surgery to correct the joint looseness.

## When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon, you may worsen your injury, which



could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your sport or activity is determined by how soon your shoulder recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred.

You may safely return to your sport or activity when:

- ▶ your injured shoulder has full range of motion without pain
- ▶ your injured shoulder has regained normal strength compared to the uninjured shoulder.

In throwing sports, you must gradually build your tolerance to throwing. This means you should start with gentle tossing and gradually throw harder.

### ***How can I prevent a shoulder subluxation?***

Shoulder subluxations are often caused by accidents that cannot be prevented. It is important to keep your shoulders strong, especially if you have had a previous shoulder injury.

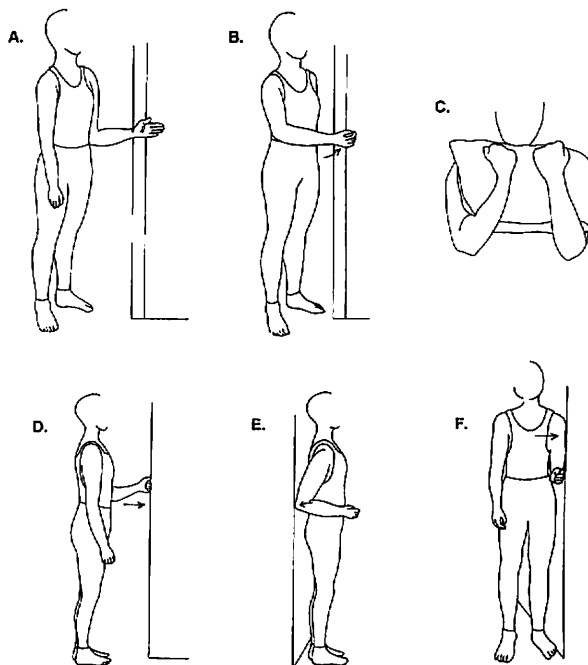
## **Shoulder Subluxation Rehabilitation Exercises**

Do these exercises as soon as your health care provider says you can.

### **Part I**

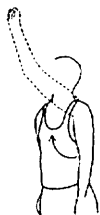
#### **1. ISOMETRICS**

- A. **EXTERNAL ROTATION:** Standing in a doorway with your elbow bent 90° and the back of your hand pressing against the door frame, attempt to press your hand outward into the door frame. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.
- B. **INTERNAL ROTATION:** Standing in a doorway with your elbow bent 90° and the front of your hand pressing against the door frame, attempt to press your palm into the door frame. Hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.
- C. **ADDUCTION:** With a pillow between your chest and your arms, squeeze the pillow with your arms and hold 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.
- D. **FLEXION:** Stand facing a wall with your elbow bent at a right angle and held close to your body. Press your fist forward against the wall, hold this for 5 seconds, then rest. Do 3 sets of 10.
- E. **EXTENSION:** Standing facing away from the wall with your elbow touching the wall, press the back of your elbow into the wall and hold for 5 seconds. Rest. Do 3 sets of 10.
- F. **ABDUCTION:** Standing with your injured side towards the wall and your elbow bent at a 90-



degree angle, press the side of your arm into the wall as if attempting to lift it. Hold for 5 seconds. Rest. Do 3 sets of 10.

**2. SHOULDER FLEXION:** Stand with your arms hanging down at your side. Keep your elbow straight and lift your arms up over your head as far as you can reach. Hold the end position for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 10.

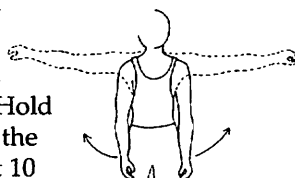


**3. SHOULDER EXTENSION:** Stand with your arms at your side. Move the arm on your injured side back, keeping your elbow straight. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Return to the starting position and repeat 10 times.



**4. SHOULDER ABDUCTION AND ADDUCTION:**

Stand with your arms at your sides. Bring your arms up, out to the side, and toward the ceiling. Hold for 5 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.



**5. ELBOW RANGE OF MOTION:** Gently bring your palm up toward your shoulder and bend your elbow as far as you can. Then straighten your elbow as far as you can 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

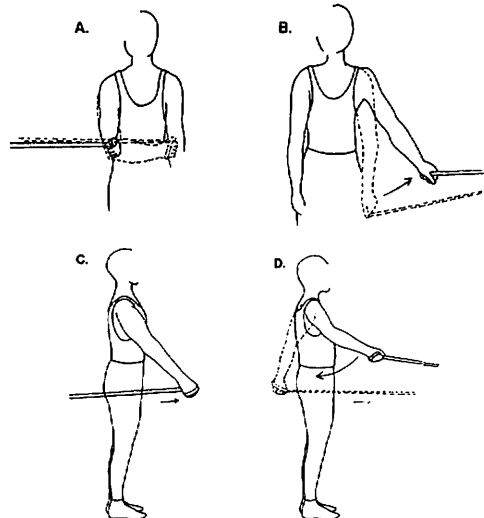


As this becomes easier, add a weight to your hand to give you some resistance.

**Part II**

**6. TUBING EXERCISES**

- A. INTERNAL ROTATION:** Using tubing connected to a door knob or other object at waist level, keep your elbow in at your side and rotate your arm inward across your body. Make sure you keep your forearm parallel to the floor. Do 3 sets of 10.
- B. ADDUCTION:** Stand sideways with your injured side toward the door and out approximately 8 to 10 inches. Slowly bring your arm next to your body holding onto the tubing for resistance. Do 3 sets of 10.
- C. FLEXION:** Facing away from the door with the tubing connected to the door knob, keep your elbow straight and pull your arm forward. Do 3 sets of 10.
- D. EXTENSION:** Using the tubing, pull your arm back. Be sure to keep your elbow straight. Do 3 sets of 10.



**7. LATISSIMUS DORSI STRENGTHENING:**

Sit on a firm chair. Place your hands on the seat on either side of you. Lift your buttocks off the chair. Hold this position for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

