

fact sheet

Shoulder Strain

Also known as:

Acromioclavicular Joint Strain

Rotator Cuff Strain

What is it?

AC joint irritation is a common cause of shoulder pain. The AC joint can be irritated or arthritic. It becomes irritated from excessive or abnormal forces across the joint such as a frozen shoulder resulting in excessive compensatory movement through the AC joint. AC arthritis can occur from chronically disturbed movement patterns or trauma.

How is it diagnosed?

Workers may have increasing pain with activity and pain at night with inability to sleep on the affected shoulder. Pain may radiate across the chest, down the arm, and up into the neck. Superficial shoulder tip pain may also be present.

What to look for

AC joint irritation could result from a fall on the affected shoulder. There may be localized pain, tenderness and prominence over the AC joint. A cross chest test will result in pain.

How is it treated?

The use of a sling may be necessary and analgesics may be required. Worker should perform range of motion exercises and resume activities as tolerated.

Tests

Physical exam.

Common Medications

Anti inflammatories

AC joint injection

What is the expected return to work?

Review in 2-3 weeks. If poor response, consider trial of work conditioning for 4-6 weeks. Referral to specialist if response still not satisfactory.

Job Classification	RTW Minimum-Maximum
Sedentary Work	0 - 21 days
Light Work	0 - 21 days
Medium Work.....	7 - 28 days
Heavy Work	14 - 28 days
Very Heavy Work	14 - 28 days

Surgical treatment:

Job Classification	RTW Minimum-Maximum
Sedentary Work.....	10 - 35 days
Medium Work	21 - 45 days
Heavy Work.....	21 - 84 days

Work Restrictions and Accommodations

Job duty modification, if necessary. Resume activities and job duties as tolerated.