

## Total Shoulder Replacement

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This document will give you information about a total shoulder replacement. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### **What is arthritis?**

Arthritis is a group of conditions that cause damage to one or more joints.

The most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis, where there is gradual wear and tear of a joint. Some other types of arthritis are associated with inflammation of the joints. Arthritis eventually wears away the normal cartilage covering the surface of the joint and the bone underneath becomes damaged. This causes pain and stiffness in the joint.

### **What are the benefits of surgery?**

You should get less pain and be able to move your arm more easily.

### **Are there any alternatives to surgery?**

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can help control the pain. Regular moderate exercise can help to reduce stiffness in your shoulder.

A steroid injection into your shoulder joint can sometimes reduce pain and stiffness. All of these measures become less effective if your arthritis gets worse.

### **What does the operation involve?**

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes an hour to 90 minutes.

Your surgeon will make a cut on the front of your shoulder and remove the damaged ball (head of the humerus). They will replace the ball and sometimes also the socket. The new ball is made of metal and the socket is usually made of plastic (see figure 1).

Your shoulder replacement is fixed into the bone using a special coating on the arm side of your shoulder joint.

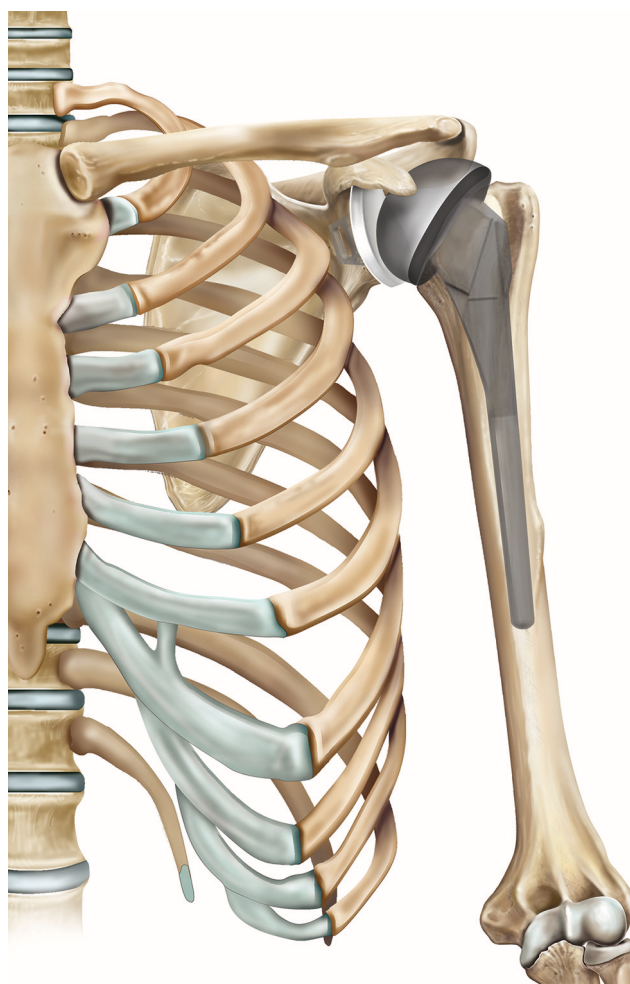


Figure 1  
A total shoulder replacement

### **What complications can happen?**

#### **1 General complications**

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Chest infection
- Heart attack
- Stroke

#### **2 Specific complications**

- Damage to nerves
- Infection
- Loosening
- Rotator-cuff tears
- Dislocation
- Stiff shoulder

### **How soon will I recover?**

You should be able to go home after two to three days.

You will need to keep your arm in a sling to keep the tension away from your shoulder joint.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery, have less pain, and can move about better. An artificial shoulder never feels quite the same as a normal shoulder and it is important to look after it in the long term.

A shoulder replacement can wear out with time.

### **Summary**

Arthritis of your shoulder can cause severe pain, stiffness and disability. A shoulder replacement should reduce your pain and help you to move your shoulder more easily.

### **Acknowledgements**

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