

Give pain the cold shoulder

Pioneering keyhole surgery techniques could release you from the prison of pain caused by serious shoulder issues

Shoulder pain is extremely common and it's estimated that it's responsible for more than four million sick days in the UK every year. However, pain and stiffness don't just affect your ability to work. They can affect your enjoyment of sports, life in general, playing with your children, and even your ability to get a good night's sleep.

In the first instance, you should try and treat shoulder pain with simple measures – for example, avoiding any activities that make the pain worse (particularly overhead activities), and taking over-the-counter painkillers and anti-inflammatory medication. If symptoms persist, it's important to see a specialist with experience in dealing with shoulder problems.

A major culprit

The rotator cuff (a group of tendons inside the shoulder) is one of the most common causes of shoulder pain. Symptoms can occur due to overuse, impingement (squashing of the tendon by a bony spur), or a physical injury.

When non-operative treatment of the shoulder is unsuccessful, keyhole surgery is an excellent option. It is associated with very high patient satisfaction rates and most patients undergoing a repair of a rotator cuff tear will get excellent improvement in movement and reduction of pain.

Choose the right surgeon

If you are considering undergoing surgery for your shoulder, one of the most important decisions is finding the right surgeon. The reality for most patients is that their GP refers them

to their closest hospital and they end up seeing a surgeon picked at random by an administrator. However, even in the NHS, patients are entitled to choose the surgeon and hospital that will provide their treatment – so ask your GP for advice about getting to see the surgeon of your choice.

It's an idea to research individual surgeon's websites to help you make an informed decision about who to choose. Many specialists still perform open-shoulder surgery (a large cut is made in

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the skin). However, modern techniques, using keyhole surgery, are preferable because the risk of infection is extremely small and the recovery can be very quick. Don't be afraid to ask your surgeon about how many rotator-cuff repairs they perform a year. As with all walks of life, practise makes perfect and those surgeons performing this type of surgery on a weekly basis are likely to achieve better results than those who perform the surgery infrequently. Finally, some tendon tears can be too big to repair, so it's important to make sure that your surgeon is able to adequately deal with this situation should it arise.

Professor Saithna offers InSpace Balloon and Superior Capsule Reconstruction as advanced surgical



MEET THE EXPERT



Professor Adnan Saithna is an internationally recognised consultant orthopaedic surgeon, specialising in arthroscopic

(keyhole) sports injury, knee and shoulder surgery. Recently, his work has received awards from the Arthroscopy Association of North America and the British Orthopaedic Sports Traumatology and Arthroscopy Association.

Professor Saithna provides an expert opinion to deliver the best solution for each patient's specific circumstances in an efficient and caring manner. He is based at Renacres Private Hospital and Southport and Ormskirk NHS hospitals, serving Merseyside and Lancashire.





options for patients with a rotator cuff tear that's too big to repair but are too young (or want to avoid) a major shoulder-replacement operation. Details of these procedures are available via his website (see below).

Movement, restored

Another common condition that causes pain and severely restricted movement is frozen shoulder. In the majority of patients, frozen shoulder occurs without an obvious cause, but in some patients it can occur following an injury or due to underlying conditions, such as diabetes. Inside the frozen shoulder, the joint capsule (lining) becomes scarred and contracted and this causes severe pain and stiffness. Patients will often notice that when the initial pain settles down, the stiffness persists.

In the first instance, the simple measures described above for managing shoulder pain should be tried. In cases where non-operative treatment fails to improve symptoms, keyhole surgery of the shoulder can be a very effective option in helping patients get back a good range of motion and achieving excellent pain relief. During surgery, the tight joint lining is released and painful inflammatory tissue is removed. The main advantage of keyhole surgery over non-operative treatment is that patients can very quickly regain good movement and return to their normal activities.

Keeping it simple

Keyhole shoulder surgery allows the surgeon to visualise all parts of the joint and deal with problems that may not be easily seen by making a single large incision. Infection rates are very low and significantly less than open surgery. Keyhole surgery is typically performed as a day case under general anaesthetic, though it can also be performed with patients awake, and usually, patients can go home on the same day. With advanced modern techniques, keyhole surgery of the shoulder is very successful in achieving high patient satisfaction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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