

# Information Sheet

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## Shoulder Dislocation and Injury

### Overview

British Canoeing cannot issue guidance on the avoidance or treatment of shoulder injuries, however, can provide information which may be helpful in understanding more about this type of injury.

Shoulder injuries and dislocations can occur when paddling at any time but are more prevalent on white water, surf or in heavy seas often when the range of movement is near its maximum and subject to force. Some individuals are more prone to injury or dislocations but they are usually unexpected.

If a shoulder dislocation is suspected avoid:

- Moving your upper arm (use a sling or support as necessary)
- Attempting to put your arm back in yourself

### What is a dislocation?

A dislocated shoulder happens when your upper arm pops out of your shoulder socket. The shoulder is one of the easiest joints to dislocate because the ball joint of your upper arm sits in a very shallow socket. This makes the arm extremely mobile and able to move in many directions, but also means it is not very stable. Sometimes the surrounding tissues supporting the shoulder joint may also be overstretched or torn.

Shoulder dislocations can be either complete or partial. A partial dislocation, known as subluxation in the medical field, happens when the upper arm bone (humerus) partially moves out of the shoulder socket. A complete dislocation occurs when the humerus completely moves out of the shoulder socket. Both types of dislocations cause shoulder pain and instability, requiring medical treatment.

Dislocations can occur in different directions, including downward, backward, and forward. The most common type is forward dislocation, known as anterior instability, representing approximately 95% of all shoulder dislocations. Severe dislocations can result in damage to ligaments and tendons. When these structures are injured, the shoulder can become unstable, necessitating appropriate treatment to restore stability.

### Video Explanation

Sports injury Clinic have produced a [short video](#) explaining dislocations.

There is a higher risk of dislocating your shoulder again after your first dislocation. This is because the muscles and soft tissue holding the joint in the place can become stretched.

- If you first dislocate your shoulder before you are 30, there is a 70% chance of recurrent instability (the shoulder dislocating again in the future).
- If you are over 40 years old when the first dislocation happens, there is less than a 10% chance of reoccurrence.

### **How do I recognise a dislocation?**

Some of the ways a dislocation may be recognised are:

- You cannot move your arm
- Your shoulder looks out of place or has changed shape
- Your shoulder is painful, bruised or swollen.

A dislocation while paddling will normally render the paddler in need of immediate assistance and recovery to land. Being properly equipped and carrying a means of calling for help in line with British Canoeing guidance and training will be important in the successful treatment of any casualty.

### **Recovering from a dislocated shoulder**

Recovery timescales can vary depending on the cause of the problem, and whether this is your first dislocation.

- It can take up to 12 weeks to recover from a dislocated shoulder. It may take up to 16 weeks to fully return to playing some sports, but for some recovery can take longer.
- You will need to wear a sling to support your arm for the first few weeks.
- A physiotherapist may recommend some regular shoulder exercises to help reduce pain and stiffness.
- Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise you on when you can return to daily tasks like driving or playing sport.

There are different types of dislocation. Any physiotherapy or rehabilitation exercises and physio will be specific to the individual and nature of the dislocation. Your doctor or physiotherapist can advise you on recovery and rehabilitation.

### **References**

- [NHS - Conditions - Dislocations](#)
- [Cambridge University Hospital - Shoulder Dislocations](#)
- [North Lanarkshire NHS - Shoulder Instability](#)