



BROKEN SHOULDER

INJURY DEFINITION:

A broken shoulder is the term usually given to a fractured humerus. Fracture is the medical term given to a broken bone and humerus refer to the upper arm bone. The fracture will usually occur at close proximity to the ball of the shoulder joint. Some common regions where the shoulder may be fractured will include the greater tuberosity, lesser tuberosity, humeral head and shaft of the humerus.

MECHANISM OF INJURY

- Fall onto arm/shoulder
- Motor vehicle accident
- Other direct trauma



AGE GROUP AFFECTED:

Middle aged and elderly persons are most commonly affected. Women are more common and there is a strong link to those with osteoporosis. In younger populations it is usually a traumatic injury that is often associated with shoulder dislocation as well.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION:

Common clinical signs of someone with a suspected shoulder fracture include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Inability to move shoulder
- A grinding sensation when the shoulder is moved
- Deformity
- Bruising

MANAGEMENT:

The fracture should be kept immobilised as soon as possible and strong pain relief provided. Find a comfortable position and minimise any movements. Up to 85% of proximal humeral fractures can be treated non-operatively, which involves a sling or shoulder immobiliser. If the fracture is displaced, surgery may be required. Early physiotherapy referral is important. It's important to keep your wrist and fingers moving while the arm is immobilised. Your doctor and physiotherapist will advise you when it is safe to recommend range of motion, assisted, active and strengthening based exercises. Do not attempt to do too much as you will disturb fracture healing.



PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- Dry Needling
- Strength programs
- Education
- Massage
- Healing foods education
- Pilates
- Pain management strategies
- Bone health advice
- Movement education
- Mobilisation techniques
- Activity of daily living modification
- Complication advice
- Proprioception training

COMPLICATIONS:

Poor bone health, slow bone healing recovery times and frozen shoulder are common complications following a humerus fracture.

