



Acromioclavicular (AC) Sprain

The Acromioclavicular joint is formed by one end of the clavicle (collar bone) and a portion of your shoulder blade known as the acromion process. The joint is held together only by several ligaments, which may be stretched or torn when an injury occurs. There are three degrees of severity for this injury. A first degree sprain has only mild stretching of the ligaments with little separation of the joint. A second degree sprain has moderate damage, and in a third degree injury one or more of the ligaments may be torn. An injury to this area may result from an impact to the side or to the top of the shoulder.

Treatment will initially focus on decreasing the pain and inflammation in the area using modalities such as ultrasound, ice and acupuncture. Stabilizing and strengthening exercises will be added as tolerated.

The therapeutic modalities commonly used include:

Ultrasound: uses sound waves and may be used to decrease scar tissue, increase blood flow, or decrease pain.

Interferential Current: uses electrical current to decrease pain, can also be used to elicit muscle contraction and decrease swelling.

Acupuncture: uses small, solid needles to encourage healing, reduce pain, and improve function of affected areas of the body.

What can you do at home?

Rest: by decreasing your activity you allow your body a chance to heal itself. When you start to feel better it is important to ease back into activities which might be aggravating. Listen to your body - pain means that you have done too much.

Ice: ice decreases the metabolism of your cells so that they do not die despite a decrease in oxygen to the injured area. Ice should be kept on for approximately 15 minutes, several times a day. The injured area should be elevated (above the level of your heart) at the same time. Use a wet towel between the ice and your skin to protect against frostbite. You can use frozen veggies, cold packs, or real ice.

