



UNDERSTANDING YOUR SURGERY

ACJ Stabilisation / Reconstruction

Overview

The AC joint connects your collarbone to the tip of your shoulder blade. A severe dislocation makes the collarbone ride up, creating a visible bump. This operation pulls the collarbone back into place and rebuilds the torn ligaments using synthetic devices or tendon grafts.

About Your Procedure

Why this surgery is recommended

- A high-grade AC joint dislocation causing pain, weakness and a bump
- Active individuals and overhead athletes needing precise restoration
- Improving strength and appearance of the shoulder

What happens during surgery

- Small incisions around the shoulder and collarbone
- Collarbone repositioned and held with synthetic loops or a tendon graft
- A hook plate is occasionally used (removed at a later procedure, 12–16 weeks)
- General anaesthetic; day procedure or overnight stay

After Your Surgery

- Arm in a sling for **4–6 weeks**
- No raising the arm above 70° or across the body for **6 weeks**
- No pushing, pulling or weight through the arm for 6 weeks
- Physiotherapy starts within **2 weeks**
- No driving for **6 weeks** after surgery

Important precautions:

- Do not raise the arm above shoulder height or push/pull for 6 weeks
- If a hook plate was used, a second procedure removes it at 12–16 weeks
- Overhead athletes (swimmers, throwers, gymnasts) need 6–9 months
- Shoulder-blade retraining is key — attend physiotherapy consistently

Your Recovery at a Glance

WEEKS 1–6

Sling. Hand and elbow exercises. No elevation

WEEKS 6–12

Shoulder movement resumes

MONTHS 3–5

Progressive strengthening and stabilisation

MONTHS 4–6+

Return to sport; overhead athletes 6–9 months

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WISH TO ASK

- ? What does my recovery look like for my job or sport?
- ? What are the main risks, and how likely are they for me?
- ? What pain relief will I need, and for how long?
- ? When can I return to work, and is travel safe early on?

MY NOTES
