

Emergency Reverse Shoulder Replacement

What is a Shoulder Fracture?

A shoulder fracture occurs when the bone at the **ball (head)** of the shoulder joint is broken. This condition can significantly limit movement and cause severe pain, often requiring surgical intervention to restore function.

What Does the Operation Involve?

The procedure involves several key steps:

- **Anaesthetic Options:** Various anaesthetic techniques may be used. Your anesthetist will discuss the best option for you.
- **Surgical Approach:**
 - Your surgeon will make an incision at the front of your shoulder.
 - The **damaged ball** and **socket** of the shoulder joint will be removed.
 - An **artificial joint** will be inserted. In a reverse shoulder replacement, the **ball and socket positions are swapped**:
 - The **ball** will be attached to the shoulder blade.
 - The **socket** will be fixed to the arm bone.
- **Closure:** The incision will be closed with stitches or clips.

What Complications Can Happen?

The healthcare team will take every precaution to minimize complications. However, some risks are inherent in any surgical procedure, and some are specific to this operation.

General Complications of Any Operation

- **Bleeding:** This may occur during or after the operation but rarely requires a blood transfusion.
- **Infection:** Infections of the surgical site typically respond to antibiotics, though in some cases, special dressings or additional surgery may be needed.
- **Allergic Reactions:** To equipment, materials, or medications. Inform your doctor of any allergies.
- **Blood Clots (DVT or Pulmonary Embolism):** Risk is less than 1 in 100. Preventative measures will be taken.
- **Chest Infections:** Risk is reduced if you stop smoking and avoid Covid-19 for at least 7 weeks before surgery.
- **Heart Attack or Stroke:** Rare but serious complications that can sometimes be fatal.

Specific Complications of Reverse Shoulder Replacement

- **Nerve Damage:** Can cause weakness, numbness, or pain in the shoulder or arm (risk: less than 3 in 100).
- **Infection:** Can lead to loosening and failure of the replacement (risk: up to 3 in 100).
- **Loosening Without Infection:** May require revision surgery (risk: 3 in 100 within 2 years).

- **Rotator Cuff Tears:** Surgery may be needed to repair torn tendons.
- **Dislocation:** The artificial joint may become dislocated (risk: 1 in 100).
- **Stiff Shoulder:** Movement may not improve as expected, and the joint will not feel the same as a natural shoulder.
- **Bone Fractures:** A bone around the shoulder may break during or after the procedure (risk: 1 in 100).
- **Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS):** Severe pain, stiffness, and loss of arm and hand function may occur (risk: up to 2 in 100), and recovery can take months or years.

Consequences of This Procedure

- **Pain:** The healthcare team will work to manage your pain effectively using medication and supportive measures.
- **Scarring:** The procedure will result in scarring on your skin, which may be noticeable but typically fades over time.

How Soon Will I Recover?

- **Hospital Stay:**
 - You will likely be able to go home **2 to 3 days** after the operation.
 - However, depending on your condition, your doctor may recommend a longer stay.
- **Physiotherapy:**
 - A physiotherapist will help you begin moving your shoulder, usually **1 to 2 weeks** after surgery.
 - They will provide instructions on caring for your new shoulder and exercises to aid recovery.
- **Wound Care:**
 - The healthcare team will advise you on managing your wound, including whether you need stitches or clips removed or dressings changed.

Important Notes

- If you experience any issues or complications, either in the hospital or after returning home, contact the healthcare team. They are there to help reassure you and address any concerns.
- Keep this document for reference, as it provides valuable information for discussions with your healthcare team.
- Some details, including risk and complication statistics, are derived from global studies and databases.
- Your surgeon or doctor can provide personalized advice about the risks specific to you and any alternative treatment options available.

Disclaimer

This document is intended for informational purposes only and should not replace the professional advice provided by your healthcare team. Always consult your medical provider for tailored guidance regarding your treatment and recovery.

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