POST-OPERATIVE PROTOCOL

Shoulder Stabilisation

Latarjet or arthroscopic Bankart repair, for a shoulder that keeps dislocating

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This sheet takes you through your recovery, phase by phase, after an operation to stabilise your shoulder: a Latarjet operation, an arthroscopic Bankart repair, or both. The early weeks are about protecting the repair, moving the shoulder only with help and within limits; the movement and then the strength are built up gradually after that.

SLING	EXERCISES	STRENGTHENING	SPORT
4 weeks	3 times a day	From about 8 weeks	From 6 to 9 months

Your operation

Your shoulder is a ball and socket joint with a shallow socket, which lets the arm move freely but also lets the ball slip out: a dislocation, usually forwards. This can tear the rim of gristle around the front of the socket and the lining of the joint, or wear away part of the front edge of the socket. After that, the shoulder can keep slipping out, or feel as if it might.

In an arthroscopic Bankart repair, through a few small openings (keyhole surgery), the surgeon stitches the torn rim and lining back onto the front of the socket. In a Latarjet operation, through a cut at the front of the shoulder, the surgeon moves a small piece of bone, with the muscles attached to it, from the front of the shoulder blade to the front of the socket, and fixes it with screws: this makes the socket larger, and the moved muscles help to hold the ball in place when the arm is out to the side and turned outwards. Sometimes both operations are done together.

Either way, the repair needs about 8 weeks to heal firmly. Until then it must be protected: turning the arm outwards, especially with the arm out to the side, would stretch it.

Your sling

- Wear the sling for 4 weeks, day and night, including in bed.
- Take it off only to wash, and to do your exercises. To wash under your arm, lean forwards and let the arm hang down gently.
- While the arm is in the sling, use your hand for light tasks, such as writing and eating: people who use the hand early tend to have less pain and better movement later.

While the repair heals, avoid

- Turning the arm outwards further than straight ahead, until 6 weeks: with your elbow at your side, stop when your forearm points straight in front of you.
- Raising the arm above shoulder height, or lifting it with its own muscles, until 6 weeks.

- Holding the arm out to the side and turned outwards at the same time, until 8 weeks: for example, reaching up behind your head, or the position for throwing a ball.
- Lifting or carrying anything heavier than a cup, until 8 weeks.
- Forcing any stretch, especially turning the arm outwards, at any stage.

Easing pain and swelling

- Take your painkillers regularly, as prescribed, rather than waiting for the pain to build up. The exercises are much easier when the pain is under control.
- Once the numbness has worn off, an ice pack wrapped in a thin towel, for up to 20 minutes at a time, several times a day, eases pain and swelling. Keep the dressings dry.
- Many people sleep better propped up on pillows, with a pillow supporting the operated arm.

Getting back to everyday life

- Driving: ask your doctor before you drive again. When you can depends on your progress, and on feeling confident that you can control the car safely.
- Keeping fit: from about 4 weeks, brisk walking or an exercise bike, as comfort allows.
- Swimming: from about 4 months, starting with gentle breaststroke.
- Heavy lifting: your return to heavy lifting is built up gradually, and planned separately for each person, depending on your work and what it demands of your shoulder.
- Sport: usually from 6 to 9 months. Your return is built up gradually, and planned separately for each person, depending on the sport and how much contact it involves.

What to expect

You will usually be seen in clinic roughly six weeks after your operation; after a Latarjet, an X-ray then checks that the moved bone is healing. Smoking slows healing, so stopping helps. The aim is a stable, comfortable shoulder that moves as freely and as far as it allows, which varies from person to person.

CONTACT THE CLINIC URGENTLY IF

- You have a fever, or feel unwell.
- The wound becomes red, hot or more swollen, or starts to leak.
- The pain suddenly gets much worse, or your painkillers are not controlling it.
- Your hand goes numb, or your fingers turn cold, pale or blue.
- You have pain or swelling in your calf.
- You have a fall, or the shoulder slips out of place or suddenly feels different.

Clinic: +91 99197 03477. If you are short of breath or have chest pain, go to the nearest emergency department straight away.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Start Phase 1 on the day after your operation, unless you are told otherwise.
- Until 6 weeks, move the shoulder only with help, from your other arm or a table, and keep the arm below shoulder height.
- Move slowly and smoothly. Some discomfort is normal, but stop if a movement causes sharp pain, or makes the shoulder feel as if it might slip out, and never force it. Check in a mirror that your shoulder does not hitch up towards your ear.
- The timings are a guide. Follow these exercises as they are written unless Dr Malik tells you otherwise.
- This sheet does not replace individual advice. If it differs from what you were told in clinic, follow the advice you were given there.

WEEKS 0–6

Phase 1: Protecting the repair

The repair is at its most fragile. Wear the sling for the first 4 weeks, taking it off only to wash and to do these exercises. Until 6 weeks, move the shoulder only with help, keeping the arm in front of you and below shoulder height, and turning it outwards only until your forearm points straight ahead.

01 Neck, elbow, wrist and hand

Keeping the joints around the shoulder moving while the arm is in the sling.

1. Neck: sitting up tall, turn your head slowly to look over each shoulder in turn, then tilt each ear towards its shoulder.
2. Elbow: with the sling off and your upper arm resting at your side, bend and straighten the elbow as far as it goes.
3. Wrist and hand: circle your wrist both ways, then make a fist and spread your fingers wide.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10 of each	3 times a day

02 Shoulder blade exercises

Keeping the shoulder blade moving freely, and helping your posture.

1. Sit or stand up tall, with the operated arm resting in the sling or on a pillow.
2. Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears, then let them drop and relax.
3. Draw your shoulders gently forwards, then squeeze your shoulder blades back and down. Hold for 5 seconds, and relax.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10 of each	3 times a day

03 Table slides

Moving the shoulder, with the table taking the weight of the arm.

1. Sit at a table with your operated arm resting on it, the hand on a small towel.
2. Lean your body forwards so that your hand slides forwards along the table. The arm moves because you lean, not because you lift it.
3. Slide forwards, and a little out to the side, only as far as is comfortable.
4. Sit back to slide the hand back.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10	3 times a day

04 Turning the arm outwards, with help

Gently keeping the outward turn of the arm, with your other arm doing the work.

1. Lie on your back with your operated elbow bent to a right angle and tucked into your side. A folded towel under the elbow helps.
2. Hold a stick, such as a rolled umbrella, in both hands.
3. Use your other arm to push the operated hand slowly outwards, keeping the elbow tucked in. Until 6 weeks, stop when your forearm points straight up at the ceiling.
4. From 6 weeks, go gradually further as comfort allows, but never force it. You can then do it without the stick.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	UNTIL 6 WEEKS
10	3 times a day	Forearm pointing up

05 Gentle muscle tightening

Waking up the shoulder muscles gently, without moving the joint.

1. Sit or stand up tall, with your palms together in front of your chest and your elbows bent, as if in prayer.
2. Press your palms gently together, using only about a third of your strength.
3. Hold, then relax. It should not hurt.

HOLD	REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
5 seconds	10	3 times a day

06 Leaning on your hands

From 4 weeks: steadying the shoulder, by taking a little weight through the arm.

1. Stand at a kitchen worktop or a sturdy table, with both hands flat on it, shoulder-width apart, and your elbows straight.
2. Shift your weight slowly onto the operated arm, hold, then shift it back onto the other arm.
3. When this is easy, lean on a wall instead, and then march slowly on the spot as you lean.
4. It should not hurt, or make the shoulder feel unsteady.

HOLD	REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
5 seconds	10	3 times a day	From 4 weeks

07 Muscle tightening in each direction

From 4 weeks: waking up the muscles that steady the shoulder, without moving the joint.

1. Stand side-on to a wall, the operated arm nearest to it, with the elbow bent to a right angle and tucked into your side. The arm does not move in this exercise.
2. Outwards: press the back of your wrist gently against the wall.
3. Sideways: press the outside of your elbow gently against the wall.
4. Inwards: in a doorway, press the palm side of your wrist gently against the door frame.
5. Use only about a third of your full strength. It should not hurt.

HOLD	REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
5 seconds	10 each way	3 times a day	From 4 weeks

MOVING ON Leave off the sling at about 4 weeks. Move on at about 6 weeks, once these feel easy.

WEEKS 6–8 Phase 2: Regaining movement

Carry on with the Phase 1 exercises, and add these. Until 8 weeks, do not hold the arm out to the side and turned outwards together, or lift anything heavier than a cup.

08 Lying arm raises, with help

From 6 weeks: raising the arm, with your other hand doing the work.

1. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head.
2. Hold the wrist of your operated arm with your other hand. Let the operated arm stay relaxed: your other hand does the lifting.
3. Raise the arm up and over towards your head, as far as is comfortable, then lower it slowly.
4. As it gets easier, let your other hand do less of the work.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

09 Wall slides

From 6 weeks: raising the arm, with the wall taking some of its weight.

1. Stand facing a smooth wall with a small cloth under your hands, or clean socks on them, so that they slide easily.
2. Place the little-finger edges of your hands against the wall, thumbs towards you.
3. Step towards the wall as you press gently into it, and slide your hands up as comfort allows.
4. Relax, and slide back down to the start.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

10 Raising the arm on its own

From 6 weeks: lifting the arm with its own muscles, forwards and out to the side.

1. Start lying down: do the lying arm raises (exercise 08) with less and less help, until the arm lifts on its own.
2. When that is easy, do the same sitting, and then standing: raise the arm forwards as high as is comfortable, and lower it slowly.
3. Then raise it out to the side in the same way, with your thumb pointing up.
4. Use a mirror: your shoulder should not hitch up towards your ear. If it does, go back to lifting with help for a while.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10 of each	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

> **MOVING ON** Move on at about 8 weeks, when you can move the arm comfortably and your shoulder does not hitch up as you move.

FROM 8 WEEKS

Phase 3: Getting stronger

By about 8 weeks the repair should be firm. You can now gradually raise the arm out to the side and turn it outwards together, for example to reach up behind your head, as comfort allows, but never force it. Strengthening against resistance usually starts from about 8 weeks, when Dr Malik agrees: your physiotherapist will build up the strength and control of your shoulder and arm, taking particular care with turning outwards against resistance, and, if you play sport, prepare you for it step by step. Increase your use of the arm gradually, and ease off if it becomes tired or sore.

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