

Acromioclavicular Joint Repair

What is an acromioclavicular joint separation?

The acromioclavicular joint (AC joint) is where the collarbone (clavicle) meets the highest point of the wing bone (acromion). The ligaments that surround and stabilize the AC joint are torn. Without any ligament support, the shoulder falls under the weight of the arm and the clavicle is pushed up, causing a bump on the shoulder.

How do you repair an AC separation?

Dr. Acevedo uses a strong non-absorbable suture reinforced with metal buttons to stabilize the joint. If the injury is within 4 weeks, then the surgery can be done arthroscopically assisted and minimally invasive. If the injury is old, reconstructing the ligaments that attach to the underside of the collarbone using an open incision may be done. Cadaver tendon is used to reconstruct the ligaments. It is your choice to use the cadaver tendon.

Length of Stay

An arthroscopic Acromioclavicular repair is outpatient surgery. You will need someone to drive you home.

Anesthesia

Patients usually general anesthesia, which means you are asleep.

Incision

You will have an incision across your shoulder usually on the top. After the incision has healed, it is usually very thin and not very noticeable. You will also have 2-3 small 1cm incisions around your shoulder.

Pain

You will have an opioid limiting pain regimen prescribed for when you are discharged home. Typically, you will be given Toradol, an anti-inflammatory to take for 3-5 days, Gabapentin a nerve pain medication to be taken for 2 weeks, and a narcotic medication such as Norco or Percocet to be used sparingly for breakthrough pain. **After a few days most patients are comfortable on ES Tylenol.**

Sling

Your arm will be placed in a sling prior to leaving the operating room. Sling use is for 6 weeks. You are to remain in your sling 24 hours a day. This includes sleeping in your sling. The sling can be removed to get dressed and for showers only.

Wound Dressings

You will go home with tegaderm and gauze dressings. After 3 days you may remove the dressings. There will be a steri-strips over the incisions. The steri strips are to remain in place until they fall off on their own. The sutures are absorbable and buried.

Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy will begin at 6 weeks after surgery. After 2 weeks you will be allowed to perform light exercises while at home. Dr. Acevedo will show you these exercises at the post operative visit. If you prefer home therapy, Dr Acevedo can prescribe you a program with the MyHealthTrack app.

Restrictions

Recovery from an AC separation surgery is six months. During that time, you will have restrictions on the use of your operative arm.

Day of surgery to Week 6: no use of arm (Typing is ok), out of work

Months 1.5-3: opposite hand work only

Months 3-4.5: no lifting or carrying greater than 10 lbs., only occasional reaching

Months 4.5-6: no lifting greater than 20 lbs.

> 6 Months: No restrictions. No Contact Sports for 9 months.

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