

Separated Shoulder

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A separated shoulder, not to be confused with shoulder dislocation, often occurs during a fall on the apex or tip of the shoulder, resulting in a tear of the ligament that holds the collarbone to the top of the shoulder. Although this type of injury is considered to be a sprain, there are varying degrees of tears.

Severity of the sprain is based on the level of disability following the injury. Minor symptoms can occur, such as soreness or a small bump located in the area, but more serious injuries can result in loss of range of motion or lack of strength in the shoulder. In many cases, X-rays can only show evidence of more severe, or Grade Three, separation.

Unlike many shoulder dislocations that require surgery to repair the injury, there are few cases of surgical intervention needed for separations. Treatment is generally conservative with short-term immobilization, ice, physical therapy, and exercise. In fact, many studies have shown that such conservative treatment and surgery essentially have the same results one year after a shoulder-separation injury.