

# Integrated Shoulder and Elbow Service

A guide for patients

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## Shoulder and elbow pain\*

Shoulder problems are common and often caused by simple things like taking off your coat, lifting something awkwardly, taking part in sports, or a trip or fall. As you get older, normal wear and tear can cause your shoulder problem to flare up now and again, often for no reason.

Elbow problems can be the result of an injury from sport or due to repetitive movements of the elbow. It may also be due to a flare up of an existing problem.

Shoulder and/or elbow problems can cause a wide range of symptoms including pain, stiffness, weakness and swelling.

You don't normally need to see a healthcare professional. New onset or flare-up of a longstanding shoulder problem should begin to settle within 6 weeks.

\*NHS Inform accessed 4.2.20

## What is the NHS Lothian Integrated Shoulder and Elbow Service?

Only a small number of people with shoulder and/or elbow problems need further help. In NHS Lothian all the services which help people with shoulder and/or elbow problems work together to ensure that they provide **the right service, for the right person, at the right time, in the right place**. This is the NHS Lothian Integrated Shoulder and Elbow Service.

## I have been referred. What happens now?

- We will contact you by letter (or sometimes by phone)
- You will be offered an appointment in your area
- Where possible we will offer a choice of clinic locations
- You will be assessed by the clinician best placed to help you, based on the information that has been provided.

Most people will see a **Physiotherapist**. They work with you to help you with your problem.

A few people will see one of our **Advanced Practice Physiotherapists**. They are specialists who can arrange investigations and work closely with Orthopaedic Consultants. Very few people with shoulder and/or elbow problems require an operation.

## What happens at your first appointment?

Your symptoms will be assessed at your first appointment. This may be a telephone or face to face appointment. A number of questions are asked and you may be asked to partially undress so that your shoulder and/or elbow can be examined.

Shoulder and/or Elbow problems rarely need investigations. The Advanced Practice Physiotherapists can arrange a number of investigations and treatments including injections, physiotherapy, and surgical opinion. The findings of the assessment will be discussed with you. Your treatment and management options will then be decided jointly with you.

## **Before your appointment**

- Keep a list of your current medication and tablets that you are taking to hand
- You may wish to make a list of any questions and concerns that you have.

### **If your appointment is over the phone:**

- If you have recently changed your telephone number, please make sure to contact us by calling 0131 536 1060 – option 7
- At your appointment time, please ensure you are in a private, quiet space. We may phone you from a withheld number.


### **If your appointment is at an NHS premises:**

- Plan your travel and please arrive before your appointment time
- Bring suitable clothing for a physical assessment.

## **Keeping your appointment**

If you cannot keep your appointment, or have been given one that is unsuitable, please change it by phoning the number on your appointment letter. Please provide as much notice as possible so that we can give the appointment to someone else. This helps us keep our waiting times to a minimum.

## **How to get advice and help**

 **Reliable, trustworthy advice and information about shoulder and elbow problems from:**  
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints>

 **Integrated Shoulder and Elbow Service website**  
<https://services.nhslothian.scot/ISES/Pages/default.aspx>

**“NHS 24 MSK Help” App:**

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/tools-and-apps/nhs-24-msk-help-app>