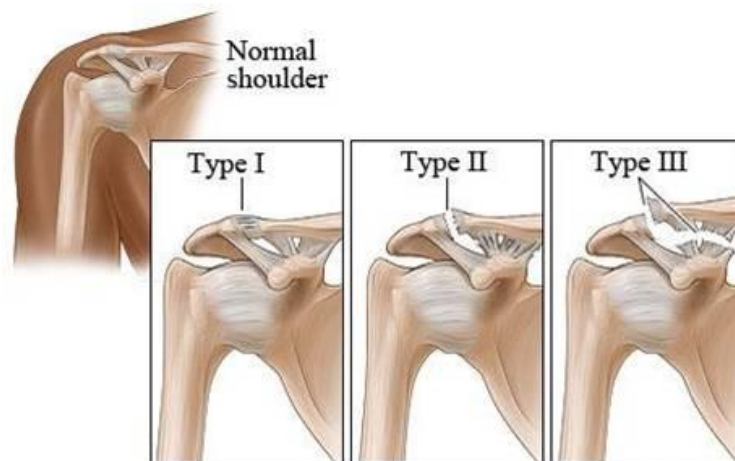




Acromioclavicular Injuries

What is an AC joint injury?

The Acromioclavicular (AC) joint is commonly injured during sports, especially when falling directly on the shoulder. This is commonly called a “shoulder separation” (not to be confused with shoulder dislocations). AC injuries can be painful, stubborn, and may require rest from sport for a period of time. Generally, they are graded 1-3 depending on the severity of the injury (however a few other rare grades also exist).



Acute Treatment:

- Sling (3-7 days) for comfort
- Ice, NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naprosyn, Voltaren cream, etc.)
- Gentle range of motion exercises – pendulum, circles
- Gradually add shoulder strengthening exercises as pain and motion improve
- Physical Therapy – can hasten recovery

When can I return to sports/work?

- Return to sports/work varies widely depending on the severity of injury, pain, sports, duties, etc. Athletes should have normal, painless motion and strength before returning to play. Most people return to sports/work:
 - Grade 1-2: 1-3 weeks
 - Grade 3: 4-6 weeks

Chronic Treatment:

- Cortisone injections – for pain relief
- Orthobiologic injection - Prolotherapy or Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) injections – mixed evidence, most effective for Grades 1-2
- Surgery - usually for severe cases (grades 3+), possibly in high-level throwing athletes or Grade 3 injuries who fail 3-6 months of non-operative treatment