

Rotator cuff tear

The shoulder joint is surrounded by the rotator cuff, formed by tendons of several muscles. The cuff may tear when you fall on an outstretched arm or because of a sudden jerking stress to the shoulder. Partial ruptures of the rotator cuff may become symptomless within weeks or months. Complete ruptures usually require a reconstructive surgery.

Procedure

The operation is performed **under regional and/or general anaesthesia using keyhole surgery**. In the operation, the rupture of the tendon is sewn up. If necessary, the procedure is performed as an open surgery through a larger incision.

Rehabilitation

The post-operative therapy depends on the tightness of the sutures. A sling, which is worn for 4–6 weeks, is sufficient in minor tendon injuries. In major injuries, the shoulder is supported according to the extent of the rupture.

The final rehabilitation of the shoulder requires months. Active exercises of the fingers, wrist, and elbow joint are started immediately after the surgery. See the rehabilitation guide ([pdf file in Finnish](#)).

Wound care

After the first 24 hours you can shower.

- A) No infusor pump: remove the bandages before taking the shower. Redress the wound after showering.
- B) If an infusor pump for local anesthetic is used you need to keep the wound area dry. You can shower normally the day after the removal of the infusor pump (three days after the operation). First remove the wound dressings.

The sutures will be removed after 10-14 days at your health centre, occupational health centre, or health clinic (neuvola) (_____/_____ date).You can go to the sauna the day after the removal. **The correct position of the arm must be kept in mind.**

If the shoulder is propped up to a certain position, the arm must not be lowered down even in the shower, and it must be supported by e.g. plastic covered pillows.

. Treatment of pain

The regional anaesthesia of the shoulder is a part of the pain relief and lasts for several hours, even up to the evening. At the final stage of the surgery, a thin tube may be inserted into the shoulder. The tube is connected to a pain relief pump ([see the guide for the pain relief pump](#)).

Additionally, **it is recommended that you take pain killers regularly for 1–4 days** and after that when necessary:

Paracetamol

Anti-inflammatory

Strong painkiller

Other medication

The shoulder may be swollen after the surgery. **Ice packs and pain killers reduce the swelling and pain, contributing to the recovery.**

Follow-up visit is with the physician 4–6 weeks after the operation.

Sick leave depends on your occupation and extent of the repaired tendon rupture. It is usually 2–3 months.

Contact us

If you experience inflammatory symptoms (increasing pain, heavy swelling, warmth, redness, continuous wound discharge) or other problems, contact your health centre or treating unit.

Day Surgery Unit A2 on working days from 07.00–17.00 tel. **(06) 323 1552**
Emergency Department at other times tel. **(06) 323 1311**
Your own health centre or occupational health centre

We wish you happy healing!