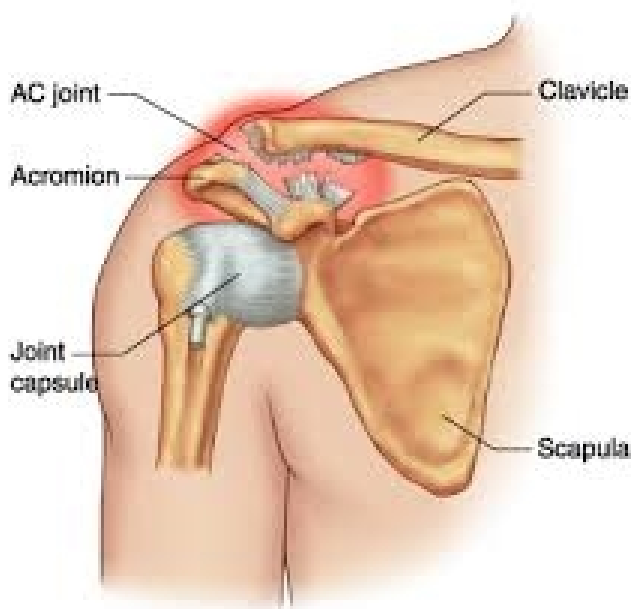


Acromioclavicular Joint Injuries

The Acromioclavicular Joint (AC joint) is located at the top of your shoulder between your shoulder blade (scapula) and collar bone (clavicle). It's about 4cm from the point of your shoulder. The AC joint is the only bony join between your scapula and the rest of the body. It is a gliding joint, and its main function is to help to transmit load from the arm to trunk during activities such as pushing, pulling and resting on the arm.

The AC joint is commonly injured during a fall directly onto the point of the shoulder, a fall onto an outstretched hand, or a direct blow to the shoulder. Patients with an AC joint injury may initially complain of a widespread pain on top of the shoulder, but will usually settle to a very specific point of pain. They will have trouble lifting their arm and be tender along the end of their collarbone. Some people may exhibit a step deformity or big lump over their AC joint.



There are 6 different grades of an AC joint.

Grade 1-3 injuries are the most common and range from a mild to complete dislocation of the joint in which the

ligaments of the joint are damaged. A step deformity is present in Grade 2-3 injuries. Grade 1-2 injuries are managed conservatively i.e. non-surgically, however Grade 3 injuries may or may not require surgery. Grade 4-6 injuries are more severe injuries in that there is greater displacement as well as surrounding soft tissue damage, and are managed surgically.

You should seek treatment as soon as possible to commence an appropriate rehabilitation program to optimize your return to sport. Conservative treatment involves managing pain and swelling, support of the arm with a sling to take the pressure off the injured joint, pain free movement and taping to support the joint. Eventually, strength and weight bearing exercises are essential to restore normal strength and coordination of the entire shoulder girdle.