

Biodegradable subacromial spacer insertion for rotator cuff tears

Information for the public

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The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that surround the shoulder joint and help to keep it stable. The rotator cuff can be injured and tear suddenly, or a tear can develop gradually. A rotator cuff tear is painful and makes the shoulder weak.

In this procedure, a balloon-shaped device (spacer) is inserted between the underside of the acromion (the prominent top part of the shoulder blade connected to the collar bone) and the top of the upper arm bone (subacromial). The aim is to reduce pain and improve shoulder function. The spacer is left in place and dissolves after about 1 year (biodegradable).

When debridement is a suitable option

When debridement (removing damaged tissue from around the shoulder joint) is a suitable option, this procedure should not be used. This is because the evidence shows that it may not work as well as debridement. Your healthcare professional should talk to you about other treatment options.

When debridement is not a suitable option

When debridement is not a suitable option, this procedure can only be done as part of a research study. This is because there is not enough evidence to be sure how well it works or how safe it is, in the long term. Your healthcare professional should talk to you about the research.

Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in [making decisions about your care](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns. They should offer you more information about the procedure. Your family or carers can be involved if you want or need them to be.

You will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

Some questions to think about

- How many appointments will I need?
- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- Will I have to stay in hospital?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- What happens if I do not want the procedure?
- Are other treatments available?

Information and support

- [NICE's information on interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on interventional procedures recommendations](#) explains what only in research means.

You can also get support from your local [Healthwatch](#).

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