

THE ACROMIO- CLAVICULAR JOINT A GENERAL OVERVIEW

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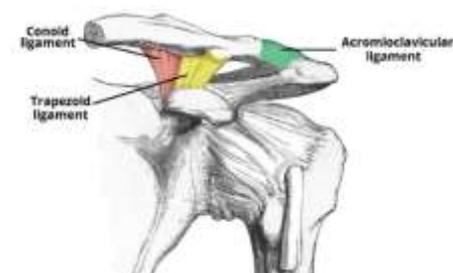
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Acromioclavicular joint: the anatomy

Also known as the "AC Joint", it is situated at the top of the shoulder. Forming the junction between the acromion of the scapula (shoulder blade) and the clavicle (collarbone) it is a synovial joint, meaning it contains synovial fluid which facilitates easy motion. It can be palpated (felt) as the highest part of your shoulder, furthest from your neck.

When the AC Joint is injured...

Injuries to this joint are most commonly seen in active young adults, and often after bicycle accidents, contact sports or car accidents.



There are a number of ligaments holding the AC joint firmly in place, and the injury may result in a tear in some or all the ligaments, or even a fracture of the distal clavicle and acromion process.



Treating the injured AC joint...

Less severe injuries can be treated non-operatively, but full ligament tears and fractures generally require open reduction (surgery). Either way, full shoulder movement can only be returned after recovery with careful physiotherapy to prevent further dislocations, or inherent weaknesses that may cause re-injury on return to sport.



Epidemiology of AC injury...

Statistics are not readily available for South Africa, but to give you an idea:

In the United States approximately 12% of shoulder dislocations involve the AC joint.

Injuries to the AC joint are the most common reason athletes seek medical attention following an acute incident (such as a dislocation).

Individuals who play contact sports, such as rugby, hockey and the martial arts, are at increased risk of AC joint injury. Males are at higher risk than females (ratio of 5:1) and younger individuals (<35 years old) appear more susceptible... in both cases probably due to participation in sports.

Prognosis?

For less severe injury – excellent. Return to sport within 1-2 weeks. For more severe cases, good to excellent outcomes following proper medical and rehabilitative care. Again, the emphasis on ensuring the correct post-injury treatment and rehabilitative regime is correctly adhered to.

Working closely together with your physiotherapist can ensure a safe return to your chosen activities, with a low likelihood of re-injury. As with most injuries to the skeletal system, in the long-term there remains a chance of arthritic and other joint degenerative conditions.

Book an appointment:

Physiodynamix, Cramerview Village Centre, corner of Curzon and Main Roads, Bryanston.

Open from: **7am to 5.30pm**; Telephone: **011 706 7433**