



PATIENT INFORMATION

POLYSLING



The purpose of this leaflet is to:

- Explain why you have been provided with a polysling
- Tell you about the risks and benefits of wearing a polysling
- Explain how to put the sling on and off and how to attend to your personal care needs (i.e. washing and dressing)
- Encourage you to commence some gentle exercises whilst wearing your sling

Why have you been provided with a polysling?

You have been prescribed a polysling by your orthopaedic consultant. This is often following an injury or surgery to the shoulder or upper arm. It allows the area you have injured, or which has been operated on to heal without putting too much stress or strain to the area. The polysling works by supporting the weight of your arm and can be used to reduce the movement of your shoulder. The sling has been fitted for your use only. Do not adjust it or fit it to anyone else. It is important to wear the sling as instructed.

How long do I have to wear the sling for?

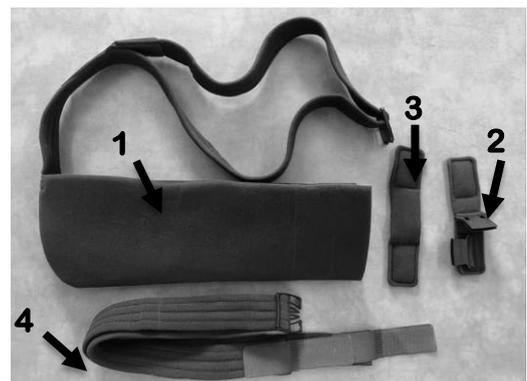
You should wear your sling for as long as directed by your consultant. Your sling should be worn at all times unless otherwise instructed. It is advised to wear the sling over your clothes, so wearing a button up shirt or large stretchy t-shirt can be best. You will receive a review with the orthopaedic clinic where your consultant will decide how long the sling is needed for.

What are the risks of wearing a polysling?

The main risk of wearing a polysling is the development of pressure areas on your skin where the sling rests. You will be shown by your physiotherapist, occupational therapist or orthotist where to look for these. There may be some red marking of the skin when you remove the sling this is normal and the marks should disappear within half an hour. It is important to check your skin regularly especially if you have altered sensation. There is also a risk of your elbow and other joints in your arm becoming stiff, whilst immobilising your shoulder. Doing the exercises below will help to prevent this.

Parts of a polysling

1. The sling, with shoulder strap built in.
2. A short strap with 2 clips attached.
3. A short strap with no attachments and Velcro on both ends.
4. A long, plain strap or belt with Velcro on each end and a buckle.



How do I put my sling on and off?

The sling should be fitted in a sitting position. It is possible to fit the sling yourself but it is much easier to get someone to help you with this.



1. Supporting the weight of your affected arm with your other arm, place it inside the sling with your elbow as far in to the corner as you can manage.
2. Close the sling over the wrist by using the strap with the buckle attachments (2). One buckle should be in the centre, facing up, and the other on the side of the sling nearest you. Close the other end near the elbow by attaching the short plain strap (3).
3. Bring the long shoulder strap (fixed to the elbow end of the sling) behind your back and over your opposite shoulder. Fasten the buckle at the top and secure the velcro fastener to the desired height. The sling should now support the weight of your arm, allowing you to fully relax your shoulder and arm.
4. If full immobilisation is required at the shoulder – use the separate body belt or strap (4). Attach with Velcro to the outside of the elbow end of the sling. Pass the strap around your back, fasten the buckle and tighten snugly around your back to attach the velcro back on itself.

Removal of sling

To take your sling off, you should try to only open the 2 buckles, and the closing straps over the top of the sling. This will ensure the sling continues to fit well each time. The sling should only be removed for washing or as instructed by your consultant or physiotherapist.

Washing and dressing

It is advised to wear your clothes underneath your sling. You may find it best to wear loose fitting or button up tops to allow you to thread your affected arm through first and then take over your head and put the other arm in. To wash, you may wish to remove the body belt, and lean forwards slightly, so your arm hangs away from your body and you can wash your underneath your arm, whilst maintaining the support.

You will not be able to shower or bathe with your sling on and will therefore need to wash around it.

Exercises

Whilst you need to wear the polysling it is advised that you carry out some maintenance exercises to help your circulation and to keep your joints supple. The following exercises are safe to carry out and should not compromise the recovery of your arm. Try to carry out the exercises 3 times a day at regular intervals.

- 1) Elbow range of movement exercises – Take your arm out of the sling and bend your elbow fully then straighten your elbow fully. Repeat 10 – 15 times.
- 2) Wrist range of movement exercises – These can be done with your sling on. Bend your wrist as far forwards as you can and then as far backwards as you can, then from side to side. You can also make small circular movements with your wrist through your full range of movement. Repeat 10 – 15 times.
- 3) Palm up and down – These can also be done in your sling. Alternately turn your palm up and down, keeping your elbow still. Ensure you move through your full range of movement. Repeat 10 – 15 times.
- 4) Hand range of movement – Curl your fingers and thumb up in to a tight fist then stretch them out straight as much as you can. Repeat 10 – 15 times.

Driving

It is advised not to drive while you are required to wear the sling as it may restrict some necessary movements and also invalidate your insurance policy. Please discuss this further with your consultant and insurance company if needed.

Contact details

If you have any specific concerns that you feel have not been answered and need explaining, please contact the Physiotherapy Department or Orthotics Department between 8:30am and 4:30pm Monday to Friday on the direct dial numbers below:

Physiotherapy:

Worcestershire Royal Hospital

01905 760622 / 760187

Alexandra Hospital

01527 512114

Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre

01562 513066

Orthotics:

Worcestershire Royal Hospital

01905 760184

Alexandra Hospital

01527 503860

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PET@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.