

# DISLOCATION OR SUBLUXATION

## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A dislocation is a joint injury in which the ends of the bones are forced from their normal position. They are no longer connected. If the bones still have some contact, it is called a subluxation. An injury may also affect the joint capsule, ligaments, and nerves.

### FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Sudden joint pain, swelling, or an out-of-place joint after an injury. The shoulder is most often affected, but it may happen to any joint including the elbow, finger, knee, ankle, toe, hip, or jaw .

Limited or no movement around a joint.

### CAUSES

Injury (fall or hit) that puts too much pressure on a joint. Less often, a dislocation may occur as a result of disease that affects the structure of the joint. A joint is where two or more bones come together in the body. Ligaments connect bones to bones.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Contact sports.

Sports or activities that require quick motion, twisting, or pivoting.

Hypermobility (loose) joints that move beyond their normal range with little effort.

Previous dislocation or subluxation of the joint.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

For sports or recreational activities (such as skating), wear proper equipment to protect the joints.

Use safety measures in the home to prevent falls or other accidents .

Do weight training to strengthen muscles and joints.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Usually curable with prompt treatment. After the dislocation has been treated, the joint may require immobilization for 2 to 8 weeks. Full recovery after surgery may take up to 6 months.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Damage to nearby nerves or major blood vessels.

Soreness and swelling may persist for many months.

Repeated injuries in the joint may lead to arthritis.

## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

Right after an injury:

An untrained person should not try to move the joint back into position. It could cause further injury.

Apply ice packs to the involved joint. Elevate it (prop it up) if possible to ease pain and prevent swelling.

If needed, use a splint or sling to prevent movement while taking the injured person to a medical facility.

Your health care provider will do an exam of the injured joint and ask questions about the activity that caused the injury.

Medical tests usually include x-rays of the joint and nearby bones to check for fractures.

Treatment to realign the bones after a dislocation or subluxation is called reduction. It may include maneuvers to put the bones back into the normal position. In some cases, surgery may be needed.

After reduction treatment, the joint may be put into a sling, splint, or cast. This allows it to heal. Crutches may be needed while the injury heals. Elevate the injured area on a pillow when you are resting.

Frequent dislocations in the same joint may need surgery to correct or replace the joint.

### MEDICATIONS

Anesthesia or muscle-relaxing drugs may be used to make the joint realignment possible.

Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen for mild pain.

Stronger pain relievers may be prescribed.

## **ACTIVITY**

Physical therapy may be prescribed to restore normal strength and range of motion to the joint.

Your health care provider will advise you about returning to sports and other physical activities.

## **DIET**

Do not eat any food before treatment in case a general anesthetic is needed.

## **NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF**

You or a family member has symptoms of a dislocation or subluxation.

Difficulty moving a joint develops after injury.

Any joint area becomes numb, pale, or cold after injury. This is an emergency!

Dislocations occur repeatedly that you can "pop" back into normal position.