

## Information for Patients

Subacromial decompression is a surgical procedure that can in some circumstances relieve shoulder pain, but should only be carried out when specific criteria are met. This is because the medical evidence tells us there are alternative treatments which are usually far more effective and should be tried first.

## About the condition

In cases of pure shoulder impingement, non-operative treatments like injections and physiotherapy are usually effective and safe. However, if you have persistent or worsening symptoms and alternatives to surgery have not worked this form of keyhole surgery can be carried out.

It's important you and your doctor make a shared decision about what's best for you especially if your pain continues to be a problem and affects your life. As with all treatments, when deciding what's best, you should consider the benefits, the risks and all the alternatives.

## What are the **BENEFITS** of the intervention?

Subacromial decompression helps relieve pain by removing inflamed tissue and widening the space above the group of muscles at the top of your arm, known as rotator cuff tendons. This decreases the chances of rubbing and catching.

## What are the **RISKS** of the intervention?

The risks associated with sub acromial decompression surgery are very low, but do include infection, a stiff shoulder, damage to blood vessels or nerves and ongoing pain. There are also the small risks associated with having a general anaesthetic as with any operation.

## What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

In the first instance, if possible, you should try to avoid things that bring on the pain. Carefully applying ice to the painful area and taking pain killers may be of help. Physiotherapy, exercises and steroid injections may also be of benefit to most patients.

## What if you do **NOTHING**?

If you are able to cope with the pain, it is not dangerous to do nothing. For some people symptoms can improve over time. However, if the pain does not improve or worsens then you should seek further advice from your doctor.

You can find out more about the [NHS Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online.