

# Wearing a Shoulder Sling



A shoulder sling is used to support your arm after injury or surgery to your arm or shoulder. It may also be used to limit movement or to elevate the arm to reduce pain and swelling.

## Wear your sling:

- All the time until your follow up appointment.
- As you need for comfort.
- During the day.
- At night while you sleep.
- Remove your sling and swathe each day to wash your arm or to do your exercises.

## Care while wearing a sling

Unless you have been instructed otherwise, follow these general care guidelines:

- Adjust the strap on the sling so your hand is slightly higher than your elbow. This helps reduce swelling.
- Be sure your elbow is back in the pocket of the sling as far as possible.
- Smooth the sling so there are no wrinkles along your arm that may cause irritation or sore spots.
- Remove the sling each day to wash your arm and shoulder. Use a damp washcloth to wash your armpit and skin. Dry well with a towel. Limit movement of your injured arm.
- Exercise your fingers, wrist and elbow three times each day on the injured arm. This will keep your muscles and joints working well. Ask about range of motion exercises for your fingers, wrist and elbow.
- Your sling can be hand washed and air-dried. You may need to purchase another sling to wear while one is being cleaned.

## Putting on the shoulder sling

Your sling will have a strap that fits over your shoulder and back and a pouch or pocket to hold your elbow and lower arm. The shoulder strap may have a pad that can be moved along the strap. The pad should be positioned where the strap comes across the side of your neck for comfort.

1. Start by sliding the closed end of the sling over your hand on the injured side.
2. Fit the sling on your arm so your elbow is back in the pocket as far as possible.

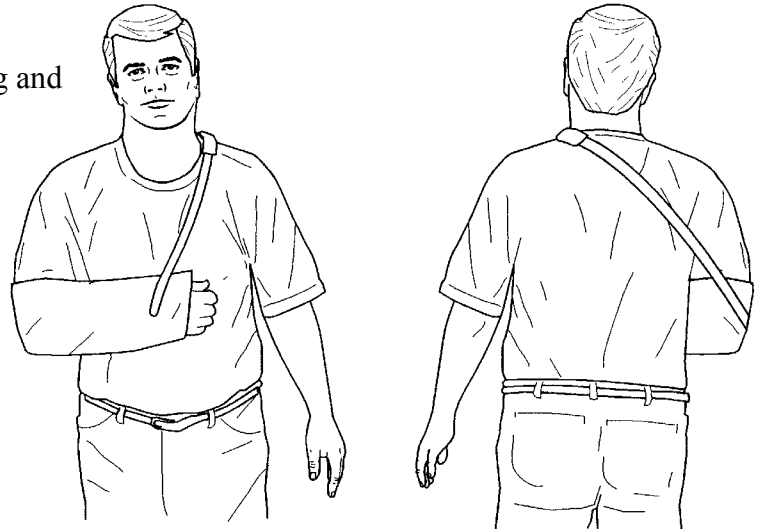


3. The long strap of the sling should go from the back of your injured arm, across your back to your other shoulder and down your chest.

**or**

If you are not able to work the strap around, you may want to attach the strap to the D-rings or other fastener and then lift the strap over your head to the opposite shoulder.

4. Attach the long strap to the D-rings or other fastener on the sling near your wrist. Slide the strap through both D-rings. Loop the strap over one ring and under the other to lock it in place.
5. Adjust the length so your hand is always at or above the level of your elbow.
6. Move the pad on the shoulder strap near your neck so it feels comfortable.



### **Taking the shoulder sling off**

1. Loosen the strap from the D-rings or other fastener and take the strap out of the D-rings.
2. Pull the pocket end down off your elbow.
3. Slide the sling under and out towards the hand on your injured arm.

**If you have any questions about your shoulder sling, please ask your doctor, nurse or therapist.**

**If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).**