



Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital

## Protect Your Shoulder Following a Stroke

After a person has a stroke, it is common to experience weakness on one side of the body. This condition is called hemiplegia. You should protect the shoulder joint on the side that has hemiplegia so that you prevent injury and speed recovery.

The weakness you have on one side makes it hard for the muscles in your shoulder to work right. When muscles aren't working right, tissues can get pinched and hurt when you or someone else moves your shoulder. This movement can result in shoulder pain and lead to long-term damage.

### How can you protect your shoulder?

You can protect your shoulder by avoiding pinching those tissues in your shoulder. You can do that three ways:

1. DON'T lift your arm above shoulder level, especially with your less affected arm.
2. DON'T let others lift your arm above shoulder level.
3. DON'T let anyone pull on your arm or shoulder.

### What about a sling?

A sling does not help you regain the use of your affected arm. Wearing a sling can promote tightness and hold your arm in a position that should be avoided following a stroke. Only use a sling if directed to do so by your therapist.

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### Shoulder Anatomy

1. Scapula (shoulder blade)—the protrusion that comes off it is called the acromion. The acromion makes the "roof" of the shoulder joint.
2. Clavicle (collarbone)—this bone connects the shoulder blade to the rest of your body at your sternum (breastbone).
3. Humerus (arm bone)—the humerus is connected to the scapula mostly by muscles and other tissues. These muscles must work together for the humerus and scapula to move freely so that you can use your arm.

