

Shoulder Fracture Fixation Surgery

If you've broken your shoulder and the bones are out of place, you may need **shoulder fracture fixation surgery** to realign and secure the fracture. This operation helps the bone heal properly, restores shoulder function, and reduces the risk of long-term problems like stiffness or weakness.

What Is A Shoulder Fracture?

A shoulder fracture usually refers to a break in the **upper arm bone (humerus)** near the shoulder joint. It can happen after a fall, accident, or sports injury. Depending on the severity, the bone may remain in place (non-displaced) or move out of position (displaced).

Symptoms of a shoulder fracture include:

- Severe shoulder pain after injury
- Swelling or bruising
- Difficulty moving the arm
- Visible deformity in more serious cases

Some fractures heal well without surgery, but others need an operation to restore proper alignment and stability.

What Is Shoulder Fracture Fixation Surgery?

Shoulder fracture fixation is an operation to **reposition and hold the broken bone in place** using metal implants such as plates, screws, or a rod. This allows the bone to heal in the correct position.

It may be done using:

- **Open reduction and internal fixation (ORIF)** – a surgical cut is made to access the fracture and secure it
- **Intramedullary nailing** – a metal rod is inserted inside the bone (for certain types of humerus fractures)

In complex cases, especially in older patients, a **shoulder replacement** may be recommended if the fracture is too severe to fix reliably.

Who Is It For?

You may need surgery if:

- The fracture is displaced or unstable
- The bone is broken into multiple pieces (comminuted fracture)

- The shoulder is dislocated as well as fractured
- You are active and need good shoulder function
- Non-surgical treatment is unlikely to give a good result

What Does The Surgery Involve?

Shoulder fracture fixation is done under general anaesthetic and typically takes 1-2 hours.

- The surgeon makes a small to moderate incision to access the fracture
- The broken bone is realigned and secured using a metal plate and screws, or a rod inside the bone
- The wound is closed and the arm placed in a sling

You'll usually stay in hospital for 1-2 nights.

Recovery And Aftercare

- Your arm will be in a sling for **2-6 weeks** to protect the healing bone
- Physiotherapy will start soon after surgery to regain movement and strength
- Most people recover well over several months, though healing time can vary based on age and injury severity

Typical recovery milestones:

- Light use of arm: 2-4 weeks
- Driving: after 6-8 weeks
- Full recovery: 3-6 months

Benefits Of Surgery

- Realigns and stabilises the broken bone
- Supports faster and more reliable healing
- Restores shoulder movement and strength
- Reduces risk of long-term pain, stiffness, or deformity

Risks And Complications

As with any surgery, there are potential risks, including:

- Infection or bleeding
- Nerve or blood vessel injury (rare)
- Stiffness or reduced range of motion
- Implant problems or need for further surgery
- Delayed healing or non-union (especially in older patients or smokers)

Your surgeon will explain the risks and how to minimise them before your operation.

Why Choose Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic?

At Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic, our expert trauma and shoulder surgeons are experienced in managing complex fractures. We offer the latest surgical techniques and work closely with physiotherapists to support your recovery every step of the way.

Get In Touch

If you've fractured your shoulder and need advice or specialist treatment, we're here to help.

Contact Midlands Orthopaedic Clinic today to book a consultation with one of our experienced orthopaedic surgeons.