

PATIENT INFORMATION

Your Recovery Timeline

This guide gives general timeframes for getting back to everyday activities after shoulder surgery. These are **typical ranges only** — your own recovery depends on the operation you had, your healing and your rehabilitation. Always follow the specific advice Dr Julyan and your physiotherapist give you, which takes precedence over any general timeline.

1 Your sling

- Many shoulder operations need a sling for a period — commonly around **4 to 6 weeks**, but this varies a lot depending on the procedure.
- Wear it as instructed, including the recommended times at night.
- You will usually be encouraged to move your fingers, wrist and elbow early to keep them supple and reduce swelling.
- You should not drive while your arm is in a sling.

2 Returning to everyday activities

The table below shows the kind of timeframes people ask about most. Your surgeon will confirm what is right for your operation.

Activity	Typical timeframe	Notes
Showering / getting the wound wet	Once advised (often after the wound review at 10–14 days)	Keep the dressing dry until then, unless told otherwise.
Driving	Not while in a sling; often several weeks	Only when you are out of the sling, off strong pain medicine, and can safely control the car.
Desk / office work	A few days to about 2 weeks	Depends on comfort, pain medicine and how much you use the arm.
Manual or heavy work	Several weeks to a few months	Discuss a graded return with the rooms; a sick note can be arranged.
Sleeping comfortably	Often easier after about 4–6 weeks	Many people prop themselves up on pillows early on.
Reaching overhead	Gradual, guided by physiotherapy	Do not push through sharp pain.
Gym / non-contact sport	Often around 3 months, built up gradually	Guided by your progress and physiotherapist.
Swimming / contact sport / heavy lifting	Often 3–6 months or more	Higher-demand activities return last.

These ranges are general. After a larger operation such as a shoulder replacement, some activities take longer; after a small day-case procedure they may be quicker.

3 Pain and swelling — what is normal

- Some pain, bruising and swelling are expected early on and settle over the following weeks.
- Pain is usually managed well with the medicine you are given — take it regularly at first.
- Discomfort often eases steadily, but full comfort and strength can take several months, particularly after tendon repairs or joint replacement.

4 Sleeping more comfortably

- Many people find lying flat difficult at first. Propping yourself up on a few pillows, or sleeping in a recliner, often helps — sometimes for the first 4 to 6 weeks.
- Keep the sling on at night if you have been advised to.

- A pillow under or in front of the arm can make side-lying more comfortable later in recovery.

Recovery is a gradual curve, not a switch. Good days and slightly sore days are normal. Steady progress with your physiotherapy matters more than rushing.

When to seek help

- Increasing pain not helped by your medicine, or pain that suddenly worsens.
- Fever, or redness, heat, spreading swelling or discharge from the wound.
- Numbness, severe pins and needles, a cold or very pale hand, or fingers you cannot move.
- Calf pain or swelling, chest pain or shortness of breath — seek urgent care.

In office hours, phone the rooms on 012 998 7550. After hours, go to your nearest casualty/emergency unit. For a life-threatening emergency phone 10177 (ambulance) or 112 from a mobile.

Rooms: Suite 6, Netcare Pretoria East Hospital, Cnr Garsfontein Rd & Netcare Drive, Moreletapark, Pretoria 0044**Tel:** 012 998 7550

After hours: 082 923 4477**Appointments:** yvette@antonjulyan.co.za

This leaflet gives general information for patients of Dr Anton Julyan and is written for a South African context. It does not replace the specific advice Dr Julyan, the anaesthetist or the nursing staff give you — their instructions always take precedence. Every patient, condition and recovery is different, and individual results vary. This is not a substitute for professional medical advice. In an emergency, phone **10177** (ambulance) or **112** from a mobile, or go to your nearest hospital casualty/emergency unit.
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