

What is the Acromio-clavicular joint (AC Joint)?

The acromio-clavicular (A-C) joint is found at the junction of the collar bone (clavicle) and point of the shoulder (acromion). It is held together by a series of strong ligaments which attach the bones and require a large force to disrupt and damage the joint.

How does injury happen?

The most common way to injure the A-C joint is a fall onto the point of the shoulder, elbow or outstretched arm. This may occur in contact sports like rugby, football and hockey or other sports like cycling and riding in which falls are common. There are varying degrees of severity depending on the amount of damage to the joint which can be assessed and investigated by your doctor or physiotherapist.

Signs and symptoms?

The most noticeable feature is a characteristic step deformity near the point of the shoulder. This is usually accompanied by local pain and tenderness (which can be quite intense), swelling of the area and difficulty with certain arm movements like reaching across the body and overhead. Depending on the nature of injury, the symptoms may last for up to 6 weeks; and if problems persist further investigation may be required. As the A-C joint is so closely related with the shoulder joint it is not uncommon for shoulder joint problems to arise and even upper spinal problems.



What should I do if I think I have an AC Joint problem?

The treatment depends mostly on the severity of the injury therefore it is essential to see a doctor or physiotherapist as soon as possible. Early management of the injury can be important in reducing the severity of the injury and should begin as soon as the injury occurs.

What is the treatment for an AC Joint problem?

As previously stated, early medical advice is essential in the determining:

The extent of injury (i.e. is there a fracture?)

The nature/classification of injury

The appropriate treatment

The prognosis - how long the injury will take to heal

When to return to sport/work

If you think you have AC Joint problems, call Armadale Central Physio on 9399 5020 for an assessment and diagnosis