

5 Complications of Traumatic Anterior Shoulder Dislocations You Don't Want to Miss!

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1 Fractures

Bankart fracture

- Occurs in up to 40% of first time dislocations. ¹
- Amount of bone loss determines management.

Greater tuberosity

- Up to 30% of greater tuberosity fractures associated with shoulder dislocation. Often missed on initial XR.

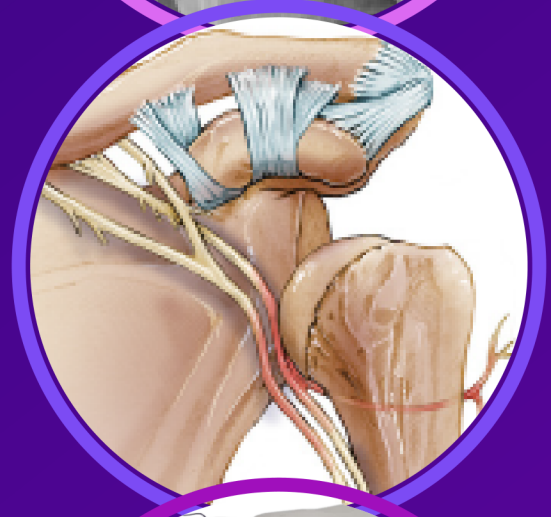
Humerus fracture

- Neck, shaft, coracoid



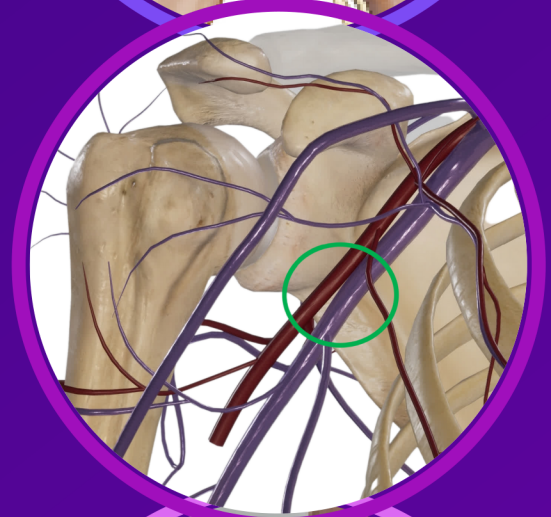
2 Axillary nerve injury

- Occurs in up to 35% of anterior dislocations. ²
- Numbness in 'deltoid patch' and weakness of teres minor (external rotation tested at 90 deg abduction) are signs of possible axillary nerve injury.
- Many are transient but if not improving, onward referral is recommended.



3 Axillary artery injury

- Rare (1-2% of anterior dislocations). More common in inferior dislocations.
- May present with absence of ipsilateral peripheral pulses, cool limb and expanding axillary haematoma.
- Symptoms/signs may not appear immediately and may develop gradually.



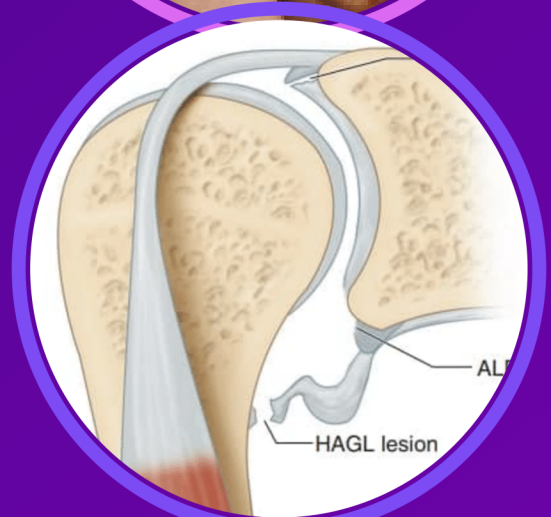
4 Rotator cuff tear

- Occurs in up to 63% of anterior dislocations. (80% in those >60 yrs).
- Common with anterior dislocations with 'try-scorer' mechanism of injury.
- Careful assessment of the rotator cuff for pain and weakness is required.



5 Humeral avulsion of glenohumeral ligaments (HAGL) lesion

- Avulsion of capsule/ligaments from humerus.
- These are difficult to detect and are often missed. They present a high risk of recurrent instability.



Clinical Implications

1. Perform a full neurovascular examination following GHJ dislocation.
2. All first-time dislocators should have an x-ray (as well as an ultrasound if concerned about rotator cuff tear). ³
3. If ongoing apprehension or recurrent instability, high-tech imaging and/or orthopaedic referral may be indicated.

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References

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2. Cutts S, Prempeh M, Drew S. Anterior shoulder dislocation. *Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.* 2009;91:2-7. 10.1308/003588409X359123.
3. The Accident Compensation Corporation. *Referral Guideline for Imaging in Patients Presenting with Shoulder Pain.* Wellington: The Accident Compensation Corporation; 2011.

