

SHOULDER REPLACEMENT

Shoulder replacement, also called 'arthroplasty,' is when parts of the joint need to be replaced because they have worn away.

Wearing away of the joint leads to osteoarthritis, which causes inflamed joints, that are painful to move.

The shoulder is a ball and socket joint, the ball part is the humeral head and the socket is the glenoid. These are the two surfaces that wear away and are replaced in shoulder replacement.

When both the glenoid and the humeral head are replaced it is called a total shoulder replacement (Figure 1). In some cases the humeral head only is changed - this is called a hemi-arthroplasty.

The artificial parts or prosthesis' that are implanted are made out of titanium or polyethylene.



Fig. 1 Prosthesis - Humeral head and glenoid

Osteoarthritis is one reason for joint replacement, another is a condition called cuff arthropathy. This is when the rotator cuff is insufficient and non functioning causing the surface of the humeral head to degenerate (Figure 2-arrow).

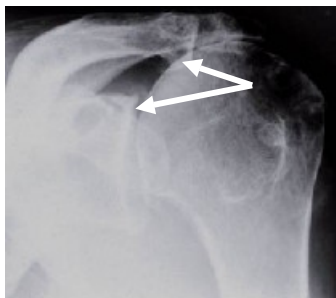


Fig. 2 Humeral head degeneration (x-ray)

It is recommended that you seek advice from an orthopaedic shoulder specialist regarding this condition and treatment.