

SHOULDER

Shoulder Instability — The Latarjet Procedure

The Latarjet procedure is a type of shoulder surgery used to treat repeated shoulder dislocations, especially when the shoulder keeps slipping out despite physical therapy or previous surgery. It is most often performed when there is bone loss in the shoulder joint, which makes the shoulder unstable.

Why it might be recommended

- Your shoulder dislocates frequently
- You feel your shoulder is unstable or "giving way"
- You have bone damage from previous dislocations
- Other treatments — physical therapy or earlier surgery — haven't worked
- You play contact sports or do heavy physical work

What happens during surgery

A small piece of bone is taken from a part of the shoulder blade called the coracoid and moved to the front of the shoulder socket, where it is fixed in place with screws. The moved bone and its attached muscles help stop the shoulder from slipping out and improve stability, especially during movement. The surgery is done under general anesthesia. It usually takes one to two hours, and most patients go home the same day.

Recovery

In the first few weeks, your arm will be in a sling for about four weeks, and some pain and stiffness are normal at first; gentle exercises begin as advised. Physical therapy is very important, helping restore movement, strength, and confidence in the shoulder.

Return to activities

- Daily activities: 6–8 weeks
- Driving: usually 4–6 weeks
- Non-contact sports: 4–5 months
- Contact sports: 6 months

Recovery times vary between people.

Benefits

A much more stable shoulder, a lower chance of future dislocations, good results for active people and athletes, and a high success rate when performed for the right reasons.

Possible risks

As with all surgery, risks include infection, temporary nerve irritation, stiffness, ongoing pain, screws causing discomfort (rarely requiring removal), and long-term arthritis (uncommon). Dr. Nascimento will discuss these with you in detail.

Will my shoulder be normal again?

Most people return to normal or near-normal function, feel more confident using their shoulder, and have significantly fewer or no dislocations. Some loss of extreme movement, especially rotation, can happen, but stability usually improves greatly.

Key takeaway

The Latarjet procedure is a reliable operation for recurrent shoulder dislocation, especially when bone loss is present. With proper rehabilitation, most patients regain a stable, strong shoulder and return to their usual activities.