

# Intercollegiate contact athletes with shoulder instability return to in-season sports

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College athletes experiencing in-season shoulder instability regularly return to play within one week of injury, but developed recurrent instability in 63% of cases, according to research presented today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's (AOSSM) Annual Meeting. This latest information may help guide team physicians in providing the most optimal treatment plans for injured players.

"We examined 45 athletes who suffered an anterior [shoulder instability](#) event, and found that 33 (73%) returned to play for at least part of the season after a median 5 days lost from competition," noted lead author MAJ Jonathan F. Dickens, MD, from the John A. Feagin Jr. Sports Medicine Fellowship and Keller Army Hospital in West Point, New York. "While a large portion of the athletes in this observational study return to mid-season sport, only 36% completed the season without subsequent instability."

Data from this study were collected over two academic years from three intercollegiate athletic institutions. All patients underwent a standardized accelerated rehab program and were not subject to shoulder immobilization or surgery. Athletes included in the sample were both male and female, and participated in sports including basketball, soccer, lacrosse, and football. Athletes with a subluxation [injury](#) (partial dislocation) of the shoulder were 5.3 times more likely to return in the same season compared to those with a complete dislocation. The most common reason for athletes not returning was the inability to reach sufficient shoulder function for athletic participation.

"These early results should be valuable to physicians caring for the in-season athlete with shoulder instability, as we have not yet reached a consensus treatment approach on these injuries," noted Dickens. "More research is needed to determine the effect of multiple recurrent instability events on long-term outcomes and this study will hopefully be a first good step in understanding this relationship."

While the study is still relatively limited in sample size, it remains the largest prospective study evaluating shoulder instability in in-season [athletes](#).

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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