

## Questionnaire: How to Use the Simple Shoulder Test

The Simple Shoulder Test (SST) can be used to aid the practitioner in evaluating the success of treatment in terms of shoulder function and specific activity intolerance. It is important to establish a pre-treatment baseline and then periodically monitor the patient's progress and response to treatment.

The Simple Shoulder Test was developed by the University of Washington, Department of Orthopedics, Shoulder Team. It is a self-administered questionnaire designed to document the functional status of a symptomatic shoulder. It consists of 12 "yes" or "no" questions derived from common shoulder complaints. Each question focuses on shoulder function and a specific activity intolerance.

The SST may be given at the beginning of a shoulder treatment regimen and then at intervals throughout treatment, such as at re-examinations. The answers are then compared to assess the patient's response to treatment.

### Administering the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of a front page covering some basic historical information, the actual SST questions on the back, and a number of follow-up questions about previous treatment and other related issues. Because the patient can complete the questionnaire either in the clinic or unassisted at home, the SST makes it easy to track post-treatment re-

sponse. Patients who drop out of treatment can be mailed the SST.

Patients should answer all 12 questions. They should answer them as best they can *without any assistance*—the instrument is based on patients' evaluation of their shoulder function (eliminating interobserver variability). For high performance athletes, the practitioner may wish to add sports-specific questions, e.g., "Does your shoulder allow you to spike a volleyball with your usual power and accuracy?"

### Instrument Performance

In a study performed at the University of Washington, the SST was used with a sample group of 80 subjects between the ages of 60 and 70 who appeared to have "normal" shoulders ("normal" determined by history, examination, and diagnostic ultrasound). All 80 responded that they could perform all of the activities in the SST, with the exception of lifting 8 pounds (full gallon container) to head level (1/80 said no), and throw a softball overhand (3/80 said no).

As a whole, the SST has good test-retest reproducibility. Seventy patients with functionally abnormal shoulders were retested at 5 to 30 days (mean 14 days). Ninety percent answered the questionnaire identically or reversed one answer (63% the same; 27% changed one answer), 6% changed two answers, 3% changed three, 1% changed 4 or more.

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**Reference**

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