

The Shoulder

Anatomy, Disorders, and Exercises

This article will help you to identify some of the most common causes of shoulder pain with tips to help prevent and resolve these potentially disabling conditions.

Shoulder Anatomy and Injury

The three bones that form the shoulder joint are secured in place by a number of ligaments, as well as the ever important rotator cuff muscles.

The rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles that combine at the shoulder to form a thick "cuff" over the joint. The rotator cuff has the important job of stabilizing the shoulder as well as elevating and rotating the arm. Each muscle originates on the shoulder blade (scapula) and inserts on the arm bone (humerus).

The ball and socket structure is the reason the shoulder is one of the most flexible joints in the body. [Actually, it is a large ball in a shallow cup, largely held in place by the soft-tissues, -labrum, ligaments, muscles, and tendons.] As a result of this freedom, though, the shoulder is the site of many common injuries. Repetitive overhead motions place the muscles and tendons of the shoulder in a vulnerable position. Therefore, many shoulder injuries occur in people with occupations that require overhead work. Most shoulder injuries can be treated conservatively with rest, ice, mobilization, and physical therapy. However, other shoulder injuries may require surgical intervention.

Common Shoulder Disorders

Shoulder Impingement

Impingement is one of the most common causes of pain in the adult shoulder. It results from pressure on the rotator cuff from part of the shoulder blade (scapula) as the arm is lifted. The pain may be due to a "bursitis," or inflammation, of the bursa overlying the rotator cuff or a "tendonitis" of the cuff itself. In some circumstances, a partial tear of the rotator cuff may cause impingement pain.

If you are experiencing symptoms associated with strain, call our office today to see how our techniques can benefit you. (908) 753-0144



Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

Thoracic outlet syndrome results when there is compression of the neurovascular structures that are located in the neck. Symptoms of thoracic outlet syndrome include shoulder or arm pain, tingling or numbness (paresthesias), and varying degrees of muscle weakness.

TOS can be very serious and often times requires surgery. However, more commonly patients will respond to conservative care, such as physical therapy or chiropractic if addressed promptly and correctly.

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Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder, or adhesive capsulitis, is a medical condition that involves progressive pain and loss of motion in the shoulder joint. The exact cause of frozen shoulder is not known, but it is more common in females than males. Frozen shoulder results from a thickening and shortening of the capsule that surrounds the shoulder joint.

Patients with frozen shoulder should have immediate assessment to find if an underlying cause exists, and begin a treatment regimen of physical therapy.

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Biceps Tendonitis

The biceps muscle is a large muscle in the arm that works to bend the elbow as well as elevate the shoulder. This muscle is connected to the bones above and below the arm by a thick strong tendon. Biceps tendonitis results in a painful sensation at the upper shoulder that occurs with movement of the arm.

Biceps tendonitis like other types of tendonitis often respond well to conservative physical therapy. Conversely, if left untreated, symptoms often worsen, leading to the necessity of more aggressive treatments such as medications, injections or even surgery.

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Shoulder Separation

A shoulder separation injury involves a disruption of the acromioclavicular (AC) joint. The most common cause of shoulder separation, or AC joint disruption, is a

direct fall onto the shoulder. This fall injures the tendons that provide stability to the joint.

Bicep Tendon Rupture

Rupture of the bicep tendon occurs when the tendon becomes frayed under the shoulder joint. This results when the tendon is placed under friction during repetitive movement of the arm. Symptoms of biceps tendon tears include sudden sharp pain, as well as tenderness to touch in the upper shoulder region.

If you have experienced any of the above-mentioned conditions or symptoms, you may be a candidate for conservative therapy at our office. Give us a call to find out today: (908) 753-0144.