

SHOULDER

A Healthy Shoulder The shoulder is the most flexible part of the body. The bones of the shoulder are connected by ligaments, muscles, and other strong tissues some times call “soft tissue”. A healthy shoulder has a full range of motion, and is able to move in almost any direction. Motion of an injured or damaged shoulder can become difficult and painful.

The Rotator Cuff The rotator cuff is made up of muscles and tendons that provide shoulder stability. The muscles provide shoulder motion. The tendons attach the muscles to the bones. The tissues form a sturdy “cuff” to help control the shoulder’s movement while also keeping it stable.

The Bursa The bursa cushions the bones. It is a fluid-filled sac between the rotator cuff and the acromion. The bursa helps cushion muscles and bones in the shoulder joint. It also allows the rotator cuff tendons to glide smoothly beneath the acromion. The bursa compresses when you raise your arm, and returns to normal size when you lower your arm.

Shoulder Wear and Tear Daily activity causes wear and tear of the shoulder that can cause shoulder problems. The tissues become inflamed (swollen and painful) from overuse. Other parts of the shoulder can tear or break down.

Bursitis and Tendinitis (Impingement) Tissues in the shoulder can become inflamed by repeated stress on the shoulder. When the bursa is inflamed, it is called bursitis. When the tendon is inflamed, it is called tendonitis. When tissues are swollen and have less space to move beneath the acromion it is called impingement (painful shoulder movement) especially overhead activities.

Rotator Cuff Tear One or more tendons in the rotator cuff can become inflamed with overuse or an injury. Weakness can also occur. When weakness does occur it may eventually tear. With a tear you may have problems lifting your arm; you may also notice a clicking or grating sound. You can have a partial tear (only a small portion tears) or a complete tear (the tendons tears all the way through).

Arthritis Arthritis occurs over time as the smooth cartilage that cushions the bones in the shoulder joints wear out. The bones in the joint begin to rub together as the cartilage wears away. Bone spurs (growth of bones) can form as a result of arthritis.

Shoulder Dislocation The lining of the glenoid socket is torn and allows excess movement of the shoulder resulting in recurrent tears.

Treatment for Wear and Tear of the Shoulder Treatment for wear and tear can be done on your own, by a healthcare provider, or a combination of treatments.

Active Rest Avoid movements that cause pain. Ask your healthcare provider which activities to avoid. Don't completely stop using the shoulder as this can cause more problems.

Icing and Heat Ice helps reduce inflammation and pain. Heat helps relax sore tissues. Ice should be used immediately after an injury. Heat is best used before exercise. Be aware that heat should NOT be used soon after an injury.

Medication Anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin and ibuprofen help reduce swelling in sore or injured tissue. Rather than over-the-counter anti-inflammatory, you may need medication prescribed by your physician.

Injection Therapy Your physician may recommend a Steroid injection for severe inflammation. Steroids are a strong medication that helps reduce pain and swelling. These Steroids are not the type used illegally by some athletes.

Exercise Certain exercises can help stretch and strengthen the shoulder muscles that support the joint. If needed, your physician may prescribe physical therapy.

Manipulation Forceful movement to break adhesions or stretch tissues may be needed to regain movement. This can sometimes be performed by therapists, chiropractors, or your physician may need to do this in the operating room under sedation.

Surgery If conservative treatment fails your physician may recommend surgery. Surgical procedures range from arthroscopic procedures, to open rotator cuff repairs, to shoulder joint replacement depending on the type and severity of the injury or condition.