



Common Shoulder Problems

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Rotator Cuff Injuries

Rotator cuff injuries are common problems that occur in both the athletic and non-athletic patient. The rotator cuff is a term used to describe the tendon made up of four muscles that stabilize the shoulder joint. These four muscles are the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, subscapularis and the teres minor. All four of the muscles come together and attach on the bone in one continuous band forming a thick tendon.

Injury to the rotator cuff muscles will cause the patient to have pain in the shoulder, weakness and a decrease in the range of motion. Many patients will complain that it hurts to lift the milk jug out of the refrigerator or it hurts to do things over my head like changing a light bulb. Some patients will report that they remember hurting their shoulder when they fell and landed on their arm. The severity of these injuries varies greatly and might be a rotator cuff muscle strain (pulled muscle) or a complete tear of the rotator cuff.

Initial treatment at home may include applying ice to the affected shoulder for pain and swelling relief. The administration of over-the-counter medicines like ibuprofen, aspirin or naproxen might also help with the pain. The above should be only temporary measures until a physician can evaluate this shoulder injury. It is possible that your physician will request that you have an MRI to determine the extent of your injury and choose the treatment options that are best for you.

Many treatment options are available to treat these types of shoulder injuries. The severity of the injury will determine if your injury can best be treated with rest, ice, prescription medications, physical therapy, or in some cases, surgery. Prolonging treatment eventually could lead to further damage and a complete tear of the rotator cuff.

Shoulder Dislocations (aka: glenohumeral dislocations)

The shoulder joint is the most freely movable joint in the body. The design of the shoulder allows us to move our shoulder in nearly every direction but this design also lets the shoulder "pop out of joint." The shoulder joint is comprised of two bones, a round humerus resting on a flat glenoid.

Arthritis

Arthritis is a condition which results from the inflammation of a joint. While all the joints, including wrists, elbows and shoulders, are susceptible to arthritis, it is often more severe in the joints which bear the weight of the body that is, the knee, hip, and spine. Besides joint pain, other symptoms which may indicate arthritis include fever and weight loss.

There are over one hundred varieties of this condition. In many cases, pain management can be achieved by the use of such easily obtained over-the-counter remedies as aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and naproxen. If your pain persists or restricts movement, you should consult your physician.

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