

The Shoulder

About 13.7 million people went to the doctor's office in 2003 for a shoulder problem, including 3.7 million visits for shoulder and upper arm sprains and strains. (Source: National Center for Health Statistics; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2003 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey.)

Shoulder injuries can be caused by sports activities that involve excessive overhead motion like swimming, tennis, pitching and weightlifting. People involved in everyday activities like washing walls, hanging curtains, and gardening also can get shoulder injuries due to excessive overhead arm motion.

Athletes are especially susceptible to shoulder problems. A shoulder problem can develop slowly in athletes through repetitive, intensive training routines.

Here are some facts about the shoulder from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

What are the warning signs of a shoulder injury?

If you are experiencing pain in your shoulder ask yourself these questions:

- Is the shoulder stiff? Can you rotate your arm in all the normal positions?
- Does it feel like your shoulder could pop out or slide out of the socket?
- Do you lack the strength in your shoulder to carry out your daily activities?

If you answer "yes" to any one of these questions, you should consult an orthopaedic surgeon for help in determining the severity of the problem.

What types of shoulder injuries are most prevalent?

Most problems in the shoulder involve the muscles, ligaments, and tendons rather than bones. Orthopaedic surgeons group shoulder problems into the following categories.

Instability

Sometimes, one of the shoulder joints moves or is forced out of its normal position. This condition is called instability, and can result in a dislocation of one of the joints in the shoulder. Individuals suffering from an instability problem will experience pain when they raise their arm. They also may feel as if their shoulder is slipping out of place.

Impingement

Impingement is caused by excessive rubbing of the rotator cuff and the top part of your shoulder blade called the acromion. Impingement problems can be sustained when participating in a sports activity that requires excessive overhead motion. If you do not seek medical care for the inflammation in your shoulder, it could eventually lead to a more serious injury.

Why is the rotator cuff so important?

The rotator cuff is one of the most important components of the shoulder. It is comprised of a group of muscles and tendons that hold the shoulder joint in place. The rotator cuff provides individuals with the ability to lift their arm and reach overhead. If injured, it can become difficult for people to recover the full shoulder function needed to properly participate in the sports activity.

What causes a shoulder injury to become worse?

Some people will have a tendency to ignore the pain, and "play through" shoulder injuries which only aggravates the condition, and possibly causes more problems. People also may underestimate the extent of the injury because steady pain, weakness in the arm, or limitation of joint motion will become almost second nature to them.

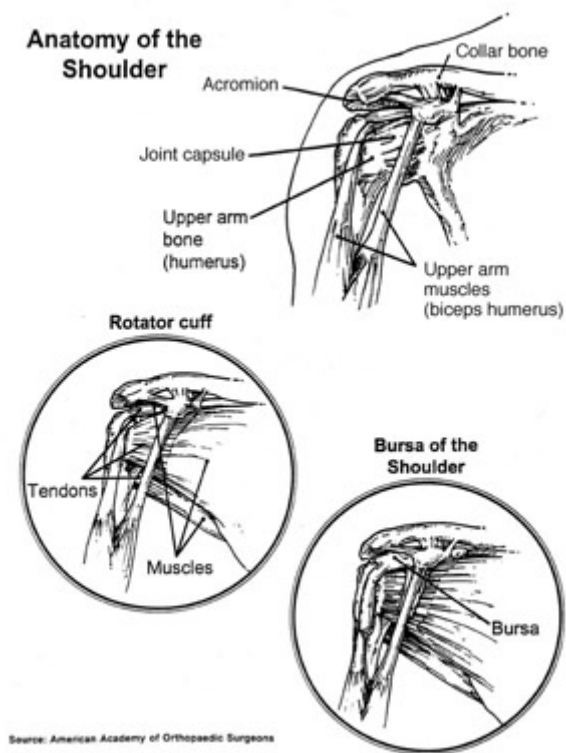
How are shoulder injuries treated?

Early detection is the key to preventing serious shoulder injuries. Many times, orthopaedic surgeons will prescribe a series of exercises aimed at strengthening shoulder muscles. Anti-inflammatory medication also may be prescribed to reduce pain and swelling.

Here is a series of shoulder exercises aimed at helping individuals strengthen their shoulder muscles and prevent injuries.

- **Basic Shoulder Strengthening Exercise:** Attach elastic tubing to a doorknob at home. Gently pull the elastic tubing toward your body. Hold for a count of 5. Repeat 5 times with each arm. Perform twice a day.
- **Wall Push-Up Exercise:** Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall and your feet shoulder-width apart. Slowly perform a push-up. Repeat 5 times. Hold for a count of 5. Perform twice a day.
- **Shoulder Press-Up Exercise:** Sit upright on a chair with armrests; your feet should be touching the floor. Use your arms to slowly rise off the chair. Hold for a count of 5.

Repeat 5 times. Perform twice a day.



For more information on "Prevent Injuries America!," call the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' public service telephone number 1-800-824-BONES (2663).

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