



UNDERSTANDING SHOULDER PAIN

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UNDERSTANDING SHOULDER HEALTH

The shoulder is one of the most flexible joints in the human body. We can move our shoulders in directions like no other joint. Since the shoulder is held together by ligaments and muscles, and has a lot of mobility, it is one of the most unstable joints in the body. If you have a job, or play a sport which requires repetitive shoulder movements, you may be at risk for a potential shoulder injury.

Common Symptoms With Shoulder Injuries

- Pain when lifting the arm to the side or out in front
- Pain when sleeping on the shoulder
- Pain with pushing or pulling
- Inability to move the shoulder through its full range of motion
- Pain or restricted movement when reaching for the safety belt

TIPS TO HELP SHOULDER PAIN

Rest/ Ice/ Heat (acute stage)

One of the most important, yet difficult, things you can do for your shoulder when injured is rest. This means reducing the activities which might be causing your pain, but not totally immobilizing or limiting all movement. The goal is to get the inflammation to calm down resulting in a decrease in pain. During the acute stage of recovery, use Ice, or cryotherapy to assist and control inflammation and pain. Applying an ice pack, or even a bag of frozen vegetables for 10–20 minutes is a good recommendation. Repeat this every 1–2 hours in the first 48 hours following an injury. With older shoulder injuries, applying heat, or thermotherapy can be beneficial in loosening stiff muscles. Be careful not to have it too warm or apply it too long resulting in irritation or burning of your skin. With heat and ice, be sure to protect your skin by adding a barrier between the heat and cold like a towel or pillow case. It is always recommended to seek a healthcare professional's advice including a physical therapist with any questions.

Exercise

Believe it or not, not moving your shoulder could lead to further injury, pain or limitation. The shoulder is so dependent on the strength and stability provided by its surrounding muscles and ligaments. If you don't use these muscles, you lose their strength! Your ligaments may tighten, and your muscles might weaken. This combination could result in the degeneration of the joint and potential shoulder pain. Properly moving and exercising the shoulder through its full range of motion is important to maintaining a strong and flexible shoulder. When injured, there are certain exercises you should perform to assist your shoulder in its recovery. Seek a physical therapist's advice for these recommendations.

Proper Body Mechanics

Using proper form while playing sports, performing overhead lifts, and daily repetitive movements is important for the health of your shoulder. When you do not use proper mechanics, you place your shoulder in a vulnerable position. This may result in an immediate injury, or increase the rate of degeneration through repetitive activities and overuse. Seek a physical therapist's advice for the proper body mechanics needed in sports and daily activities.

Braces & Supports

It might be necessary to immobilize your shoulder for a few days following an injury. A shoulder sling is commonly used to hold the arm against your body allowing the shoulder to rest. There are other braces and supports including compression garments which might be beneficial. If symptoms do not improve, always seek a healthcare or physical therapist's advice.

Seek Professional Advice

When you are injured, you always want to know what exactly is wrong. In most cases, it's hard to find those answers quickly. We suggest you immediately contact a Physical Therapist at FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers. Our physical therapists are highly trained and focused on assessing what is wrong and designing a path toward recovery. Our goal is to get you back to loving your life! We can perform the appropriate tests to assess what is wrong. If additional scans or professional advice is needed, our physical therapists will refer you for additional medical testing or advice to rule out a more serious injury.

Common Causes of Shoulder Pain

Due to the complexity of the shoulder, it is often difficult to isolate the exact cause of shoulder pain. Trauma and overuse are common causes of shoulder problems. Improper body mechanics and even inactivity are other causes. Some common injuries of the shoulder include:

Shoulder Impingement

Your rotator cuff connects your shoulder blade to the upper part of your arm bone or humerus. The tendons which connect the rotator cuff to the humerus run underneath the upper part of the scapula bone (acromion). When you raise your arm above 90 degrees, the space between these tendons and the acromion decreases. When this space is decreased, the acromion may rub against the bursa and tendons causing irritation. Performing repeated overhead activity puts you at risk for shoulder impingement. Common symptoms include experiencing pain with these overhead activities and having limited ability to reach behind your back.

Rotator Cuff Injury

Your rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles which help support your shoulder. These include the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, subscapularis, and teres minor. These muscles attach the scapula to the upper part of the arm bone or humerus. Injury to the rotator cuff may occur as a result of trauma like a fall, or slowly through repetitive activities and overuse. Injury include small to complete tear to one or more of these muscles. Symptoms include experiencing pain and weakness when lifting as well as difficulty raising your arm over your head.

Shoulder Instability

Your shoulder is a ball and socket joint with the ball of the upper arm bone setting in the socket of the shoulder blade. It is held in place by ligaments (glenoid labrum), the capsule, and by the muscles of the deltoid and rotator cuff. Instability in the shoulder occurs when these are stretched as a result of an injury or overuse. Symptoms include pain, aching and even the feeling that your shoulder is out of place.

Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis)

A frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis) is a condition that restricts mobility in the shoulder. The shoulder is surrounded by thick tissue called the capsule. This tissue can tighten and scar, making your ability to move your arm difficult. This can occur as the result of trauma, or after a period of shoulder inactivity. There is no known cause of some frozen shoulders. These seem to just appear over time. Risk factors for these include age, with 40-60 being more at risk, gender with women twice as likely as men, shoulder surgery, and even some conditions like Parkinson and heart disease. Symptoms include a dull aching pain, and the inability to move the shoulder through its range of motion.

AC Joint Sprain or Separation

A sprain or separation of the AC (acromioclavicular) joint commonly occurs as the result of trauma like a fall. The collar (clavicle) bone and upper part of the shoulder blade (scapula) form the AC joint. When the ligaments which hold these two bones together are stretched or even torn, a sprain or separation occurs. If there is a complete tear in these ligaments, a small bump might display where the clavicle has pulled up away from the shoulder. Symptoms include pain experienced with lifting, pulling and/ or overhead activities.

Shoulder Osteoarthritis

The shoulder socket (glenoid fossa) is where the upper part of the arm bone (humerus) inserts. The ball of the humerus and the upper part of the scapula (acromion) are covered with cartilage. The cartilage allows the shoulder to move freely through its range of motion. When this cartilage is injured or wears away as the result of overuse, arthritis may occur. Common symptoms include aching, stiffness and pain.

TIME TO GET

FYZICAL!

Now you have a few tips to help you manage your shoulder injury and some guidance on possibly causes. It is always best to seek the advice of a physical therapist or another healthcare professional when an injury occurs. The physical therapists at [FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers](#) are highly trained and able to assess your condition quickly and safely. Being pain free and able to live your life with no physical limitations is so important. Our goal is to get you back to loving your life!



FYZICAL eBook Series