

# Rotator Cuff Injury

The rotator cuff is made up of tendons and muscles in the shoulder that connect your upper arm bone to your shoulder blade. These also help hold the ball of your upper arm bone in your shoulder socket.

Falling, lifting and repetitive motions can cause rotator cuff injuries.

## Symptoms

- Pain in your shoulder (when reaching over your head or behind your back, lifting, pulling or sleeping on the affected side).
- Shoulder weakness.
- Wanting to keep your shoulder inactive.
- Loss of range of motion in your shoulder.

## See a Doctor

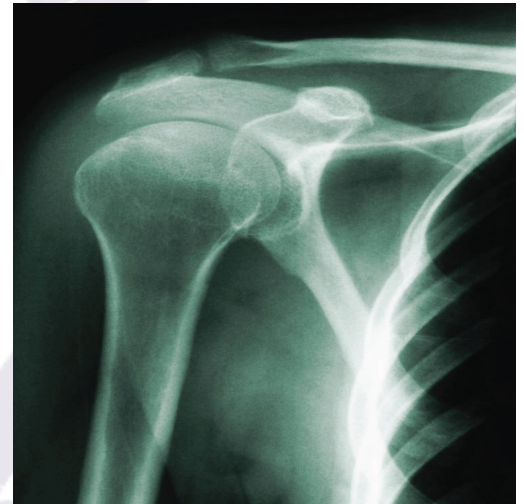
- When you have severe shoulder pain.
- When you are not able to use your arm.
- When you have shoulder pain for more than 1 week.

## Causes

- **Normal wear and tear** - After age 40, normal wear and tear can cause a breakdown of collagen in the tendons and muscles. This makes them more prone to injury and degeneration.
- **Falling** - Using your arm to break your fall or falling on your arm.
- **Repetitive stress** - Overhead movement of your arms can stress your rotator cuff muscles and tendons, causing inflammation and eventual tearing.
- **Lifting and pulling** - lifting or pulling an object that is too heavy. Improperly lifting or pulling an object can strain or tear your tendons or muscles.

## Risk Factors

- Over 40 years of age.
- Repetitive arm motions (baseball pitchers, tennis players).
- Construction work - carpenters and painters (repetitive arm motions).
- Weak shoulder muscles.



## Tests and Diagnosis

- Physical Examination.
- X-rays.
- MRI (magnetic resonance imaging).
- Ultrasound Scan.

## Treatment and Drugs

- Exercise therapy.
- Steroid injections.
- Surgery - A large tear in the rotator cuff may require surgery.
- Arthroplasty - More extensive surgery (partial or total shoulder replacement).

## Lifestyle and Home Remedies for Minor Injuries

- Rest your shoulder - Stop doing what caused the pain. No heavy lifting.
- Apply ice and heat - Ice helps reduce inflammation and pain (apply 15-20 minutes every 2 hours for 1-2 days). Heat can be used after 2-3 days when pain and inflammation are better to help relax tight and sore muscles (limit application to 20 minutes).
- Pain medicines - Aspirin, Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc), Naproxen (Aleve), or Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may reduce pain. Stop taking medications when pain improves.
- Keep muscles limber - Gentle exercises after 1-2 days. Total inactivity can cause stiff joints and can lead to frozen shoulder. This occurs when the shoulder becomes so stiff you can hardly move it.

## Prevention

- Regular shoulder exercises.
- Frequent breaks from repetitive arm and shoulder motions.
- Rest your shoulder regularly during sports requiring repetitive arm motions.
- Apply cold packs and heat pads when you experience any shoulder pain or inflammation.