

# SHOULDER PAIN

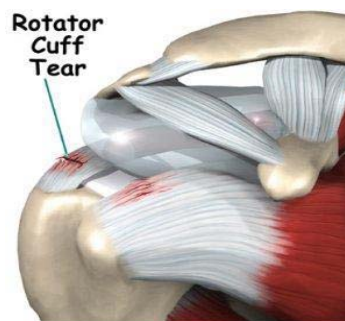
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The shoulder joint is a very mobile structure which is made of a 'ball and socket' joint with four muscles and their tendons called the rotator cuff. The rotator cuff is surrounded by an empty sac, or bursa, which helps the tendons slide as the arm is moved. The whole shoulder is surrounded by strong muscles like the deltoid, pectoralis major and trapezius. The most common shoulder conditions are: rotator cuff impingement (which causes tendonitis and/or bursitis), rotator cuff tear, frozen shoulder, and shoulder separation.

## ROTATOR CUFF

Pain in the rotator cuff is often felt at the joint, or down the arm. Overhead activities such as throwing, swimming, or repeated lifting above shoulder height can lead to pain in the rotator cuff. If the space between the rotator cuff and the bone above it is narrowed, either due to injury or the ageing process, the rotator cuff tendons and the overlying bursa can get squeezed. This is called 'impingement' and can lead to bursitis and tendonitis. Sometimes a calcium deposit may form in the rotator cuff and cause inflammation of the tendon and bursa. As we get older, the rotator cuff tendons weaken and can wear out; especially if there have been injuries in the past, or a history of a lot of wear and tear. A rotator cuff tear can occur due to the ageing process alone, or when the weakened tendons are stressed during activities or

accidents, like a fall on an outstretched arm or on the outside of the shoulder. When you see your physiotherapist, he/she will do a number of tests on you to try to find out the exact cause of your rotator cuff pain.



## FROZEN SHOULDER

Frozen shoulder, also known as adhesive capsulitis, is when you have extreme stiffness and pain in your shoulder, which doesn't have any cause that you can think of. Frozen shoulder usually affects one shoulder, although some people may develop it in both shoulders. You physiotherapist will instruct you in effective stretching and strengthening exercises to do while you recover. Most people eventually regain nearly full shoulder range of motion and strength once symptoms improve.

## SEPARATED SHOULDER

A separated shoulder is a common injury among young athletes, but it can happen to anyone who falls and lands on the tip of their shoulder. The result can be partial or full tearing of the muscles, tendons and

ligaments that hold the bones in your shoulder together. After such an injury the arm is limp, it is difficult and painful to lift it, and there is a lot of pain in the shoulder. You will be advised to wear a sling for a while, and your physiotherapist will teach you exercises to increase your range of motion and strength as you get better.



## TREATMENT

Of course, if you have had a bad injury, you should have medical attention. For such an injury you may need surgery (like a repair for a torn rotator cuff), and you will be sent to a physiotherapist for rehabilitation afterward. If you are having shoulder pain that is bothering you more and more over time, you should see a physiotherapist for diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible, as it will likely get worse on its own. Your treatment will include some pain relief, stretching exercises if needed, and strengthening. It is very important with all shoulder problems that the muscles around the shoulder be rehabilitated properly and fully, to ensure that every move you make is correct, and is not going to continue causing problems.