



Shoulder Pain

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The shoulder is one of the most mobile and versatile joints in the body. This mobility allows you to reach objects above your head, throw a ball across the field, and even scratch your back. The shoulder is made up of multiple bones, muscles, ligaments, and tendons that must work together to allow this wide range of motion. However this versatility comes at a cost, increased possibility of injury.

Shoulder pain is a common complaint among people of all ages. It usually develops over a period of time, as long as a couple years but can begin from a sudden injury. Approximately 8 million people in the U.S. will see their doctor due to shoulder pain and about half of those are for rotator cuff problems. People who perform overhead or repetitive activities are more likely to develop shoulder pain. Most shoulder problems fall into one of the following categories:

1. Tendonitis or Bursitis
2. Instability
3. Arthritis
4. Fracture

Anatomy of the Shoulder

It is important to understand the anatomy of the shoulder and how it works, in order to fully understand what can go wrong. The shoulder joint is made up of 3 bones; the Humerus (arm bone), Scapula (shoulder blade), and Clavicle (collar bone). The head of the arm bone fits into the socket of the shoulder blade creating a ball and socket joint. This joint is designed for mobility allowing movement in any direction. The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that work to create movement and keep the arm bone centered in the socket. There are other important muscles surrounding the shoulder and shoulder blade that provide a foundation for the shoulder to move. Pain and injuries occur if these muscles are not properly working together.

How can Physical Therapy help me?

A physical therapist will do a thorough examination of your shoulder as well as surrounding joints such as your neck, upper back and elbow to identify what is the source of pain. There are numerous causes of shoulder pain and often times the problem may be coming from another joint. Once the therapist has done the examination they come up with a plan of how to resolve the pain. This can include heat or ice, massage, ultrasound, electrical stimulation and kinesio tape to help decrease pain and inflammation. The therapist will provide education on proper stretching and strengthening of the muscles involved, as well as give exercises to be done at home so progress can be continued outside of the Physical Therapy office.

The sooner you receive treatment for your shoulder pain the easier and faster the recovery. If you have any pain in your shoulders come see a physical therapist. We can help you get back to throwing the perfect pitch, reaching the top shelf of the fridge, or scratching your back, all without pain.

