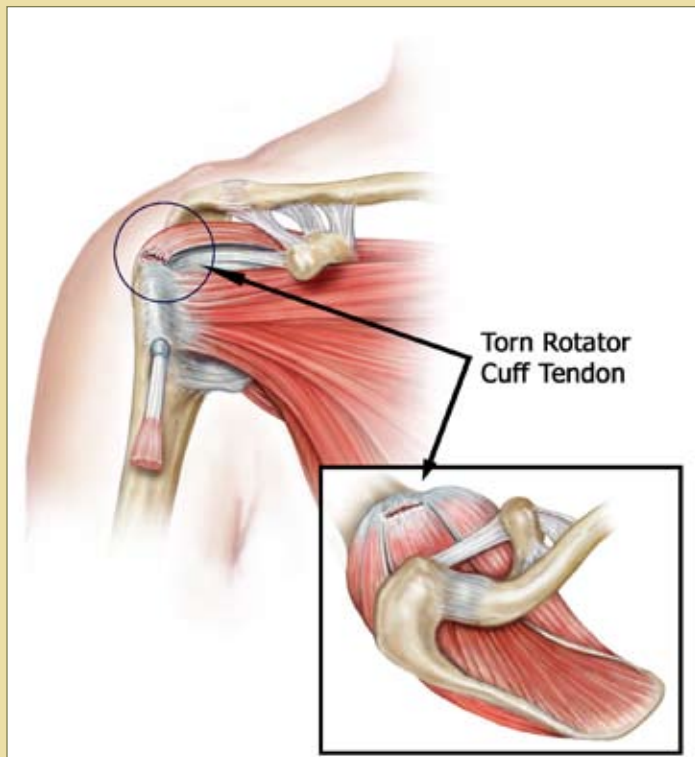


Rotator Cuff Injuries

Anatomy

The rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles and tendons that originate on the scapula (shoulder blade) and attach to the humerus (upper arm bone). They move and stabilize the shoulder as it travels through various ranges of motion. The bones of the shoulder joint are analogous to a golf ball resting on a tee. The rotator cuff performs two main functions: primarily initiating movement of the shoulder when the arm is moved away from the body, secondarily it pulls the humerus and scapula together, keeping them in close contact as the shoulder moves.

The four muscles of the rotator cuff are the subscapularis, supraspinatus, infraspinatus and teres minor. The most commonly injured rotator cuff muscle is the supraspinatus. The tendon of this muscle passes through a very narrow space between the top of the humerus and the underside of the acromion. A bone spur can develop in this area resulting in a smaller space through which the tendon can pass. This may result in significant irritation and sometimes tearing of the rotator cuff.



Symptoms

The muscles and tendons of the rotator cuff can become injured gradually or suddenly. Patients who have damaged these muscles typically complain of:

- Increased pain with certain activities
- Significant decreases in strength and range of motion
- Pain at night
- A general ache to the shoulder that sometimes radiates into the arm

CLINIC LOCATIONS

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Eagan
Forest Lake
Downtown St. Paul - Gallery
Downtown St. Paul - Ritchie
Hastings
Maplewood
Vadnais Heights
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CONTACT INFORMATION

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Symptoms for a rotator cuff tear are diverse in presentation and severity. The symptoms listed should only be thought of as a generalization of the symptoms associated with this disorder.

Don't know where to go for physical therapy? Don't worry; your doctor's patient coordinator will help you find a therapist close to where you live or work.

Diagnosis

In order to determine the cause of your symptoms, your doctor will ask you questions and conduct a physical examination. X-ray is useful in viewing the bony anatomy of the shoulder and can help confirm or eliminate a specific diagnosis. After your doctor has conducted the examination, they may recommend that you undergo more diagnostic tests such as an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan. An MRI allows your physician to clearly see the muscles, tendons, ligaments and bursa of the shoulder. This information helps your Orthopedic Surgeon formulate a treatment plan tailored to your needs.

Treatment

Depending on the severity of the injury, there are several treatment options. Your doctor may prescribe physical therapy sessions for you. Initially, the goal of these treatments is to control your pain and inflammation. Once that is achieved, the physical therapist will help you regain your strength and range of motion. In conjunction with physical therapy, your physician may prescribe oral anti-inflammatory medications and/or perform a cortisone injection.

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Medication:

Anti-inflammatory medications may be effective at decreasing inflammation due to injury. However, some people suffer from side effects while taking them. Should you experience anything unusual while taking these medications, you should contact your doctor immediately to determine if continued use is appropriate.

Cortisone Injection:

Cortisone may also be successful at controlling pain due to inflammation. By performing an injection your doctor can place the medication directly into the shoulder joint, allowing it to have the maximum effect. After the first injection is performed, you need to monitor your response and follow up with your doctor as discussed.

Surgery:

In severe rotator cuff injuries, surgery is the most effective treatment option. If you decide to proceed with surgery, you can plan on being in a sling for 4-6 weeks and not being able to use your shoulder. This is necessary so that the repaired tissues have time to heal fully. Please refer to "Rotator Cuff Surgery" for more information regarding this procedure.

After discussing your injury and symptoms with your doctor, the most appropriate course of treatment will be determined and initiated.

For additional educational materials regarding the rotator cuff please visit our website, www.summitortho.com and click on the "Patient Education" quick link at the bottom of the page.



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