

Shoulder Pain

Common Questions



**More information can be found on
Dr. Stetson's website at www.sportsmedicinedr.com**

What causes shoulder pain?

Most shoulder problems involve not the bones but the muscles, ligaments and tendons which surround the shoulder joint. The majority of shoulder pain is caused by tendinitis or bursitis, instability or an unstable shoulder joint, a direct injury to the shoulder such as a fall, or arthritis. The shoulder joint is really several joints that combine with tendons, muscles and ligaments to allow a wide range of motion. However, because of this mobility, it may lead to problems with instability or impingement of the soft tissue or bony structures in your shoulder resulting in pain. You may feel pain only when you move your shoulder or all the time. The pain may be temporary or it may continue. It can be caused by some sort of trauma or injury or it can slowly develop over time.



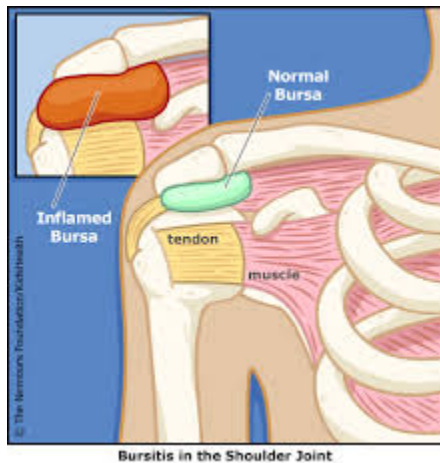
Shoulder Pain Common Questions Dr. Stetson

What is shoulder tendinitis?

The tendons of the shoulder help connect the muscles to the bone. The most commonly affected tendons in the shoulder are the four rotator cuff tendons and one of the biceps tendons. When they get inflamed this is known as tendinitis. The majority of tendinitis is a result of the wear and tear which takes place over many years and this is known as chronic tendinitis. Acute tendinitis comes on quickly after some sort of overuse such as throwing a baseball for the first time in a while or some other sports or work-related activity.

What is shoulder bursitis or impingement?

When the tendons become inflamed or irritated tendinitis develops. The bursa, which is a fluid-filled sac, lies on top of the tendons and also often becomes inflamed. This is known as subacromial bursitis or impingement. Just like tendinitis, bursitis may come on quickly or slowly. Pain may develop in the front or side part of the shoulder and may limit movement. Bursitis often occurs in association with rotator cuff tendinitis. Sometimes it goes away with a little rest, sometimes it doesn't. Patients often wait too long to seek treatment.



What is the rotator cuff?

The rotator cuff is actually made of four small muscles which surround the shoulder joint. The splitting and tearing of these muscles and tendons may result from an acute injury such as a fall or from the wear and tear of the years. Patients often complain of pain doing things over their head or pain at night. Rotator cuff injuries are very common and are best treated early before small tears become large tears.

What is frozen shoulder?

The shoulder may become so painful that patients don't want to move it at all. The joint may stiffen as a result leading to a condition called "frozen shoulder." It is also called adhesive capsulitis. Early, aggressive therapy is essential to help the shoulder thaw out and to regain motion and function.

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What is shoulder instability or an unstable shoulder?

The shoulder joint is like a golf ball on a tee. The socket, or tee, is very shallow which allows the ball, or humeral head, to move around freely. The shoulder joint is dependent on all the ligaments around it for stability or keeping the ball in the socket. Instability or an unstable shoulder can result when an injury occurs, stretching or tearing the ligaments. The shoulder can partially or completely slip out of the socket or dislocate causing severe pain. When it partially slips out, this is known as subluxation and may occur in athletes such as baseball pitchers or volleyball players.



What is shoulder arthritis?

Shoulder pain can also be caused by arthritis. Although there are many types of arthritis, the most common type is osteoarthritis. It generally involves the wear and tear of the joint. This typically causes swelling, pain and stiffness. It may be caused by some sort of injury or doing repetitive activities at work or at home. People will often avoid shoulder movements in an attempt to lessen arthritis pain. This can lead to tightening of the soft tissue parts of the joint, resulting in a painful restriction of motion.

What is a shoulder fracture?

A fracture can also cause shoulder pain and it is first thing to rule out if there has been any significant trauma to the shoulder. Fractures are broken bones and shoulder fractures can involve the collarbone, the humerus, and the scapula. Shoulder fractures in older patients are often the result of a fall from standing height. In younger patients, shoulder fractures are often caused by a high energy injury such as a motor vehicle accident or a contact sports injury.

What if I have any other questions?

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If you have any other questions, more information can be found on Dr. Stetson's website at www.sportsmedicinedr.com or just call Dr. Stetson's office, we are always happy to answer any questions you may have.

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