

## DISEASES & CONDITIONS

# Common Shoulder Injuries

In 2006, approximately 7.5 million people went to the doctor's office for a shoulder problem, including shoulder and upper arm sprains and strains. More than 4.1 million of these visits were for rotator cuff problems.

Shoulder injuries are frequently caused by athletic activities that involve excessive, repetitive, overhead motion, such as swimming, tennis, pitching, and weightlifting. Injuries can also occur during everyday activities such as washing walls, hanging curtains, and gardening.

## Warning Signs of a Shoulder Injury

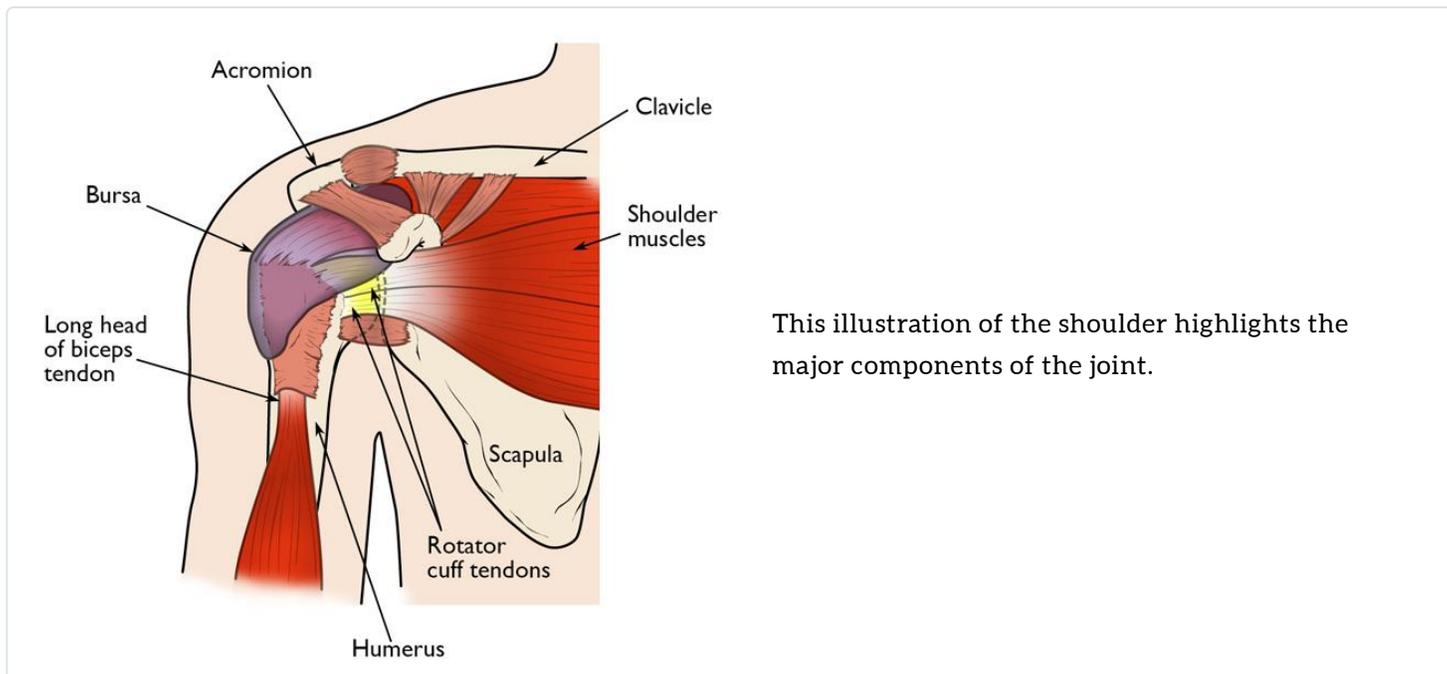
If you are experiencing pain in your shoulder, ask yourself these questions:

- Is your shoulder stiff? Can you rotate your arm in all the normal positions?
- Does it feel like your shoulder could pop out or slide out of the socket?
- Do you lack the strength in your shoulder to carry out your daily activities?

If you answered "yes" to any one of these questions, you should consult an orthopaedic surgeon for help in determining the severity of the problem.

## Common Shoulder Injuries

Most problems in the shoulder involve the muscles, ligaments, and tendons, rather than the bones. Athletes are especially susceptible to shoulder problems. In athletes, shoulder problems can develop slowly through repetitive, intensive training routines.



This illustration of the shoulder highlights the major components of the joint.

Some people will have a tendency to ignore the pain and "play through" a shoulder injury, which only aggravates the condition, and may possibly cause more problems. People also may underestimate the extent of their injury because steady pain, weakness in the arm, or limitation of joint motion will become almost second nature to them.

Orthopaedic surgeons group shoulder problems into the following categories.

### ***Instability***

Sometimes, one of the shoulder joints moves or is forced out of its normal position. This condition is called instability, and can result in a dislocation of one of the joints in the shoulder. Individuals suffering from an instability problem will experience pain when raising their arm. They also may feel as if their shoulder is slipping out of place.

### ***Impingement***

Impingement is caused by excessive rubbing of the shoulder muscles against the top part of the shoulder blade, called the acromion.

Impingement problems can occur during activities that require excessive overhead arm motion. Medical care should be sought immediately for inflammation in the shoulder because it could eventually lead to a more serious injury.

## **Rotator Cuff Injuries**

The rotator cuff is one of the most important components of the shoulder. It is comprised of a group of muscles and tendons that hold the bones of the shoulder joint together. The rotator cuff muscles provide individuals with the ability to lift their arm and reach overhead. When the rotator cuff is injured, people sometimes do not recover the full shoulder function needed to properly participate in an athletic activity.

## **Treatment of Shoulder Injuries**

Early detection is the key to preventing serious shoulder injuries.

### ***Shoulder Exercises***

Often, an orthopaedic surgeon will prescribe a series of exercises aimed at strengthening the shoulder muscles.

Here are some easy shoulder exercises that you can do to strengthen your shoulder muscles and prevent injuries.

#### **Basic shoulder strengthening**

Attach elastic tubing to a doorknob at home. Gently pull the elastic tubing toward your body. Hold for a count of five. Repeat five times with each arm. Perform twice a day.

#### **Wall push-ups**

Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall and your feet shoulder-width apart. Slowly perform a push-up. Repeat five times. Hold for a count of five. Perform twice a day.

#### **Shoulder press-ups**

Sit upright in a chair with armrest, with your feet touching the floor. Use your arms to slowly rise off the chair. Hold for a count of five. Repeat five times. Perform twice a day.

### ***Other Treatment***

Anti-inflammatory medication also may be prescribed to reduce pain and swelling.

#### **Last Reviewed**

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