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Shoulder Pain & Dysfunction



A closer look at the shoulder joint and how it works.
 Read on for a breakdown of common
 shoulder problems and how to handle them.



At Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, we are specialists in treating all orthopedic conditions and injuries.

It's our goal to help you live a healthy, active, pain-free lifestyle. We want to help you achieve your goals.

Our main focus is on you, the patient, and the goals you need to achieve to return to active, pain-free living. We will work with you and provide personalized, individualized care based on your symptoms. This care will include manual, hands-on treatment, exercises and a home exercise program. Lastly, we ensure that all patients are educated on their condition and provided with injury prevention techniques to avoid a reoccurrence of your symptoms.

Our team consists of physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and athletic trainers so you receive the highest quality of expertise, care, and patient education throughout your plan of care. All of our clinicians have a professional degree and a license to practice physical therapy. We do not use any unlicensed staff in our patient care.

While patient care is our main focus, we also believe it is very important to give back to the community. Throughout the year, we hold workshops to educate our patients and the community on ways they can improve their health and overall quality of life. **You can find a schedule of our events by going to www.LoudounSportsTherapy.com/event.** We also support several organizations in Loudoun County such as Irene's Prom Closet, Toys for Tots, and local food banks. It's very important to our mission as a local business to help those in need and we love that there are so many wonderful organizations with which to be involved that allow us to give back to the community.



*"After just a few weeks of therapy at Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, the team got me back to training at my normal level and doing it pain free. I have learned better body mechanics and I can now work, lift and practice Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu with no pain or issues. Thank you!
~Andrew J.*

Pain is not something you should have to live with or push through. The highly trained clinical staff at [Loudoun Sports Therapy Center](http://LoudounSportsTherapyCenter) will help you identify and address your pain.

After a full one-on-one evaluation, they will design an individualized plan of care to you achieve goals that matter to your daily lifestyle.

**If you have pain, DON'T WAIT!
Call [Loudoun Sports Therapy Center](http://LoudounSportsTherapyCenter) TODAY and start your journey to PAIN-FREE LIVING!**

703-450-4300

www.loudounsportstherapy.com



*Wishing you the best - today and always,
The LSTC Team*

Patient Testimonials



"I came to Loudoun Sports Therapy Center because I sprained my rotator cuff and could barely serve a tennis ball without some sort of pain. After four weeks of therapy, not only has my pain decreased significantly, but my serve is also stronger and faster! The staff here at LSTC is beyond welcoming and friendly. I couldn't have picked a better place for physical therapy. Thank you, LSTC!

~Vishal U.

"Before coming to Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, I had trouble walking or standing for long periods of time. I had constant pain in my neck and shoulder and had trouble sleeping due to shoulder pain. Now, I am back to skiing, exercising and traveling without pain. I can sleep through the night without pain and I'm finally starting to feel like me again!

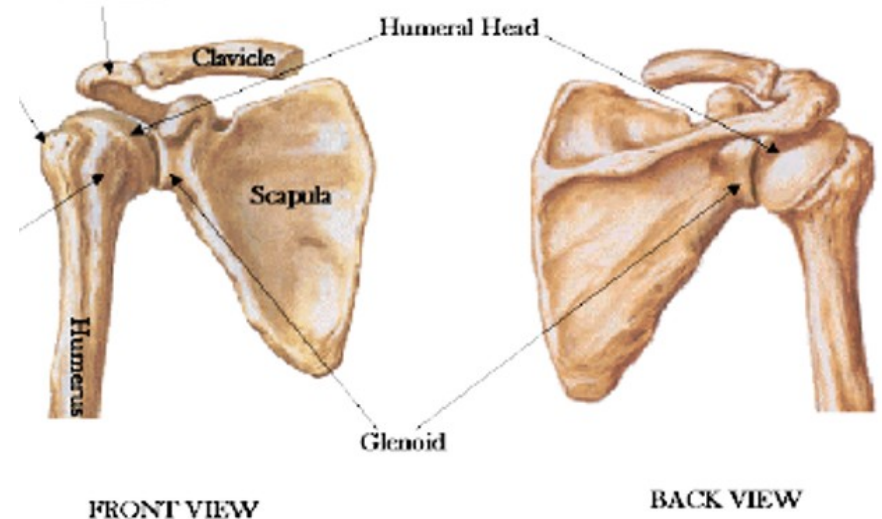
~Jacinda R.



"When I came to physical therapy, I could not lift my left arm above shoulder height. Physical therapy has strengthened my shoulder muscles and helped relieve tightness and trigger points. Now, I can lift my arm up fully without pain. I know what strength exercises to continue so I can prevent future shoulder issues.

~Tom I.

A Closer Look at the Shoulder Joint



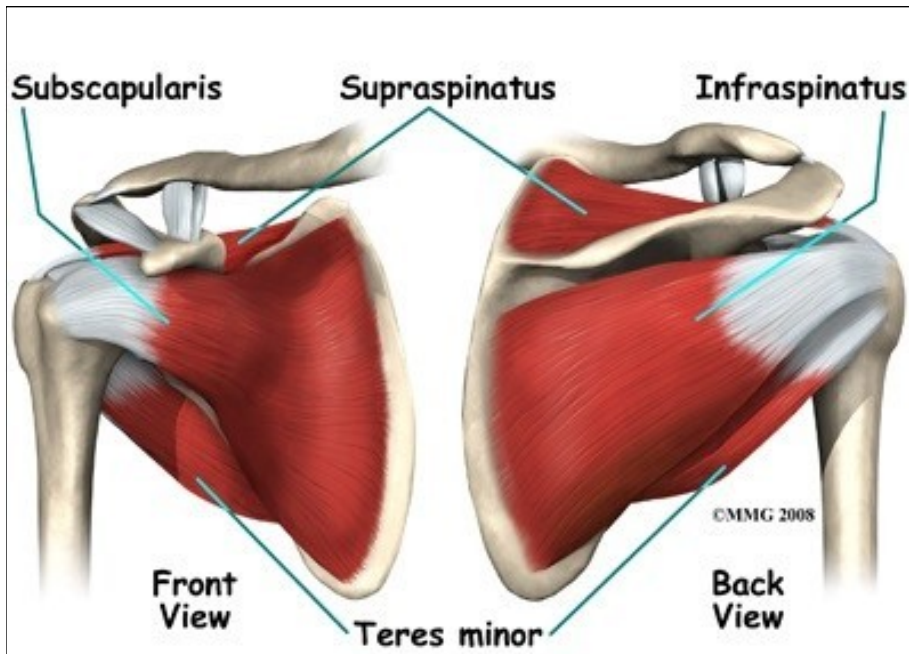
The shoulder is very complex and, while it is designed for high levels of mobility, it lacks a lot of stability, making it prone to injuries. The shoulder joint is actually made up of 3 joints:

- **Glenohumeral joint**– this is the well-known ball and socket joint of the shoulder that connects the humerus to your shoulder blade.
- **Acromioclavicular joint**– attaches the shoulder blade to the collar bone. This bony attachment essentially connects the whole shoulder to the trunk of your body.
- **Scapulothoracic joint**– the shoulder blade moves along the thoracic portion of the back of the rib cage.

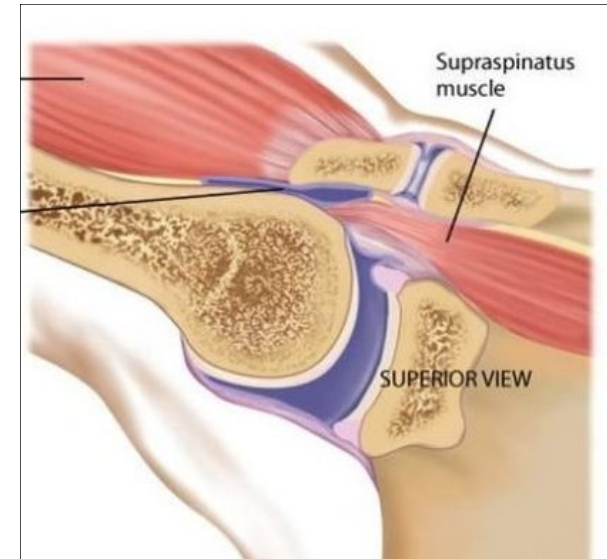
A Closer Look at the Shoulder Muscles

In addition to the joints that make up the shoulder as a whole, there are many muscles that help control movements we do daily, such as reaching to open a cabinet, throwing a baseball or scratching an itch in the middle of your back. These muscles provide support for the shoulder joint, keep the shoulder joint open, keep it in the socket, protect the structures inside the joint and create movement.

Some of these muscles also attach to your neck, mid-back, chest and ribs. This is why it is common for folks experiencing shoulder problems to also experience referred pain in these other areas.



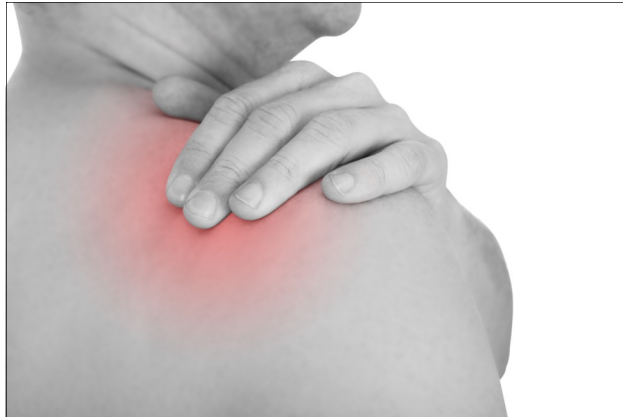
How PT Addresses Shoulder Impingement



We know that shoulder impingement occurs when the space in the shoulder joint closes and pinches on either the bursa, one of the rotator cuff tendons or the cartilage. At Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, our goal in physical therapy for a shoulder impingement patient is to open up that joint space. This will alleviate that pressure, reduce pain and restore function.

Our therapists will work with you on specific treatment to improve your posture and strengthen the muscles in the upper back that control how the shoulder sits. Through targeted strengthening and stretching, physical therapy will also improve the strength and control of the rotator cuff muscles. Our therapists will also perform hands-on therapy to help open that joint space as this is what ultimately handles the problem.

How PT Addresses Rotator Cuff Injuries



The rotator cuff takes a lot of abuse over a lifetime, which is why it can be very susceptible to injuries. We know that the rotator cuff is responsible for stabilizing the shoulder and also helping the shoulder move. When you have a rotator cuff problem, it's important to determine the deficiency in the rotator cuff and pin point which muscles are causing the dysfunction.

At Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, our physical therapists will determine why your rotator cuff isn't functioning properly and design a plan of care to restore function as well as:

- Improve your shoulder range of motion
- Restore proper joint mobility
- Reduce inflammation
- Relieve pain
- Improve strength in the rotator cuff
-

Physical therapy is a very effective and conservative treatment method that will alleviate symptoms and allow you to lead an active lifestyle without problems, even when the rotator cuff problem is a serious tear.

Common Shoulder Problems: General Pain



General shoulder pain is a common problem in all age groups regardless of activity level.

Typically, shoulder pain is the result of repetitive irritation of the shoulder joint and the surrounding muscles. While it usually is not the result of a specific injury, it can start from a particular event such as falling and catching yourself with your outstretched arm, a car accident or lifting something that is too heavy.

More often than not, though, people can't pinpoint one particular event or injury that caused their shoulder pain. Poor posture, weakened muscles and muscles that get tight over time are some primary culprits of shoulder pain. When the joint is not moving optimally, there is unnecessary rubbing and pressure in the joint that will cause both pain and inflammation.

Inflammation, especially when it lasts more than 24 hours, will slow the tissues ability to heal and can start to affect the tendons and ligaments around the shoulder. You don't have to see inflammation to experience it. There are many places in the shoulder joint that swelling can hide.

Common Shoulder Problems: Tendonitis

Tendonitis is inflammation of the tendon that attaches a muscle to a bone.

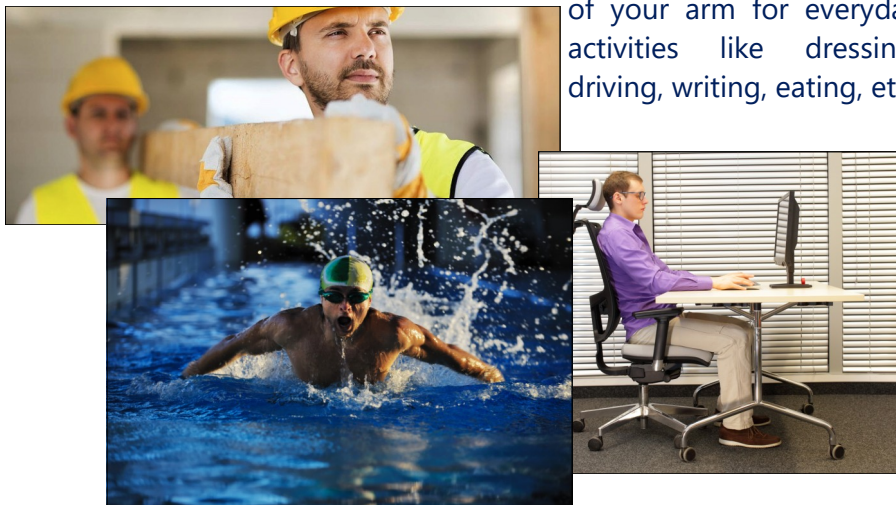
When talking about the shoulder, the structures particularly susceptible to inflammation are the bicep tendon and the rotator cuff. Symptoms of tendonitis include pain or a dull ache where the tendon is located as well as along the line it travels from the muscle to the bone. There might also be noticeable swelling or tenderness in that area, but again, swelling in the shoulder is very difficult to actually see.

Common impacts of shoulder tendonitis include:

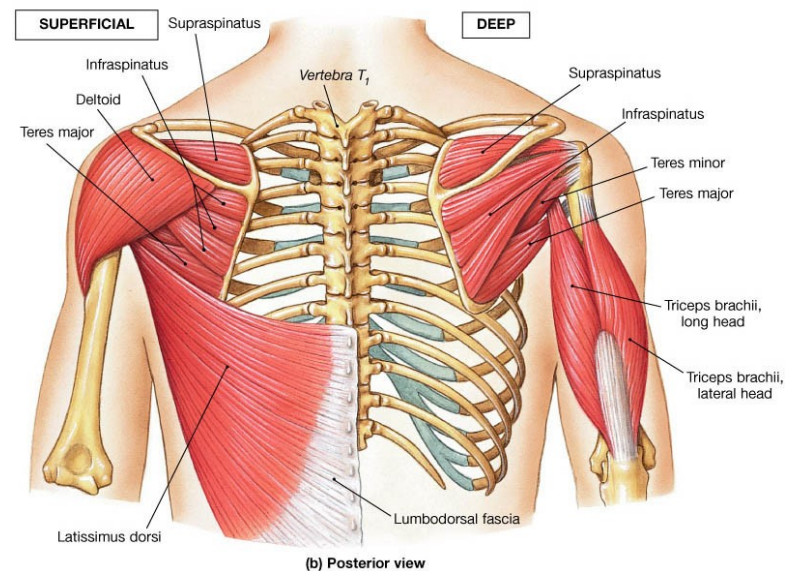
- Pain along the front of the shoulder
- Pain with overhead activities
- Pain lifting objects
- Pain reaching behind their back
- Decreased range of motion

Shoulder tendonitis can happen to any age group or fitness level. It's often seen in individuals who perform repetitive movements throughout their day. This could be someone who works a manual labor job that requires a lot of lifting, an athlete such as a swimmer or baseball player or even someone with a desk job who has to type for several hours a day. It's most frequently seen in the repetitive use

of your arm for everyday activities like dressing, driving, writing, eating, etc.



How PT Addresses Tendonitis



The shoulder has to move more than 180 degrees in different directions. At Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, our physical therapists will assess your range of motion, strength, coordination and joint mobility for any shoulder problem.

Since the root cause of tendonitis is abnormal mechanics and weakness in the stabilizing muscles surrounding the shoulder, our physical therapists will evaluate your movement and pinpoint the exact source of your discomfort. Targeted treatment will help restore stability and function to the affected area and decrease pain.

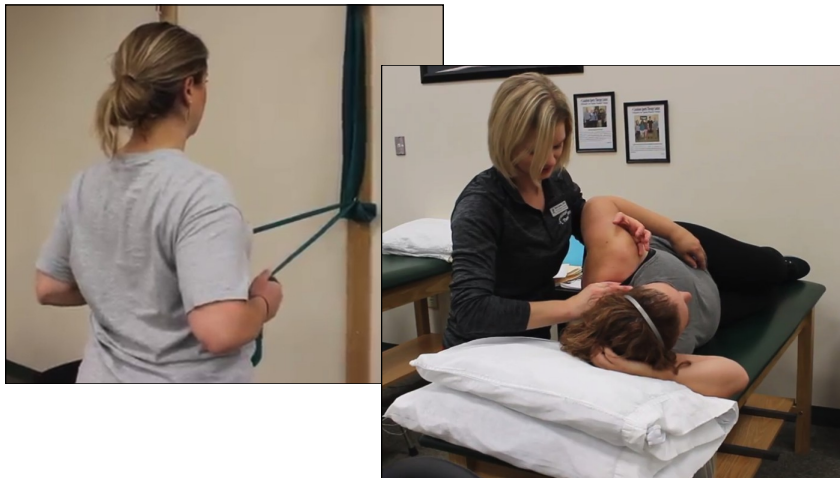
Hands-on therapy is another important part of a shoulder tendonitis patient's plan of care because this will improve the mobility of the shoulder joint and is the key to eliminating that pain once and for all.

How PT Addresses Shoulder Problems

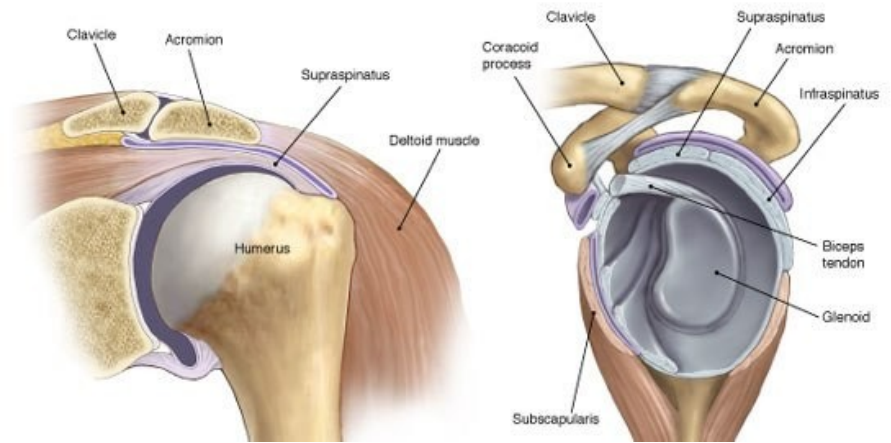
Physical therapy is a proven effective and conservative treatment option to address shoulder conditions. The majority of shoulder problems can be resolved with physical therapy without the need for surgery, prescription medications or painful injections.

At Loudoun Sports Therapy Center, we design a plan of care specific to each individual's shoulder problem and symptoms. A key component of every patient's plan of care is hands-on joint mobilization. This manual therapy increases joint mobility and helps reduce pain.

Your plan of care will also include targeted strengthening exercises and stretching. These are geared specifically to YOUR shoulder problem and help improve range of motion, increase strength and improve shoulder stability. All of these components will open up the joint space, reduce tightness and pinching on various shoulder structures, and reduce pain and inflammation.



Common Shoulder Problems: Rotator Cuff Injuries



The rotator cuff is a group of muscles that surround your shoulder and shoulder blade. They are very small muscles making them very vulnerable.

The rotator cuff has two major functions:

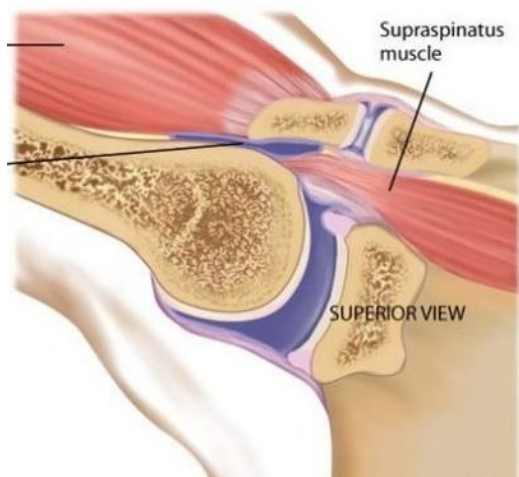
- To stabilize the shoulder and shoulder blade
- To create and or participate in movement in any part of the arm

Typically a rotator cuff injury will start because of repetitive use of the arm. Think about activities like raking leaves, painting a room or throwing a baseball. Most often, though, these injuries occur due to overhead activities such as lifting boxes overhead or some kind of traumatic event such as falling and landing on an outstretched arm.

Regardless of the cause, a rotator cuff injury occurs because the muscles in the rotator cuff were overworked or stressed in some manner. When this happens, these muscles become tight and tired. They are not able to perform their two major functions nor are they strong enough to keep the space in the shoulder joint open. When this joint space closes, it causes pinching on other shoulder structures and therefore, pain.

Rotator cuff tears are a common injury. Tears in the rotator cuff can be minor, causing pain and inflammation and can be fully healed with physical therapy. Physical therapy is also a successful treatment method in fully healing more severe tears.

Common Shoulder Problems: Shoulder Impingement



Shoulder impingement occurs when there is weakness and tightness in and around the shoulder. This tightness and weakness closes the space between the top of the head of the humerus and the collar bone. When this space closes, any one of three structures get pinched, resulting in pain:

- The bursa
- One of the rotator cuff tendons
- The cartilage

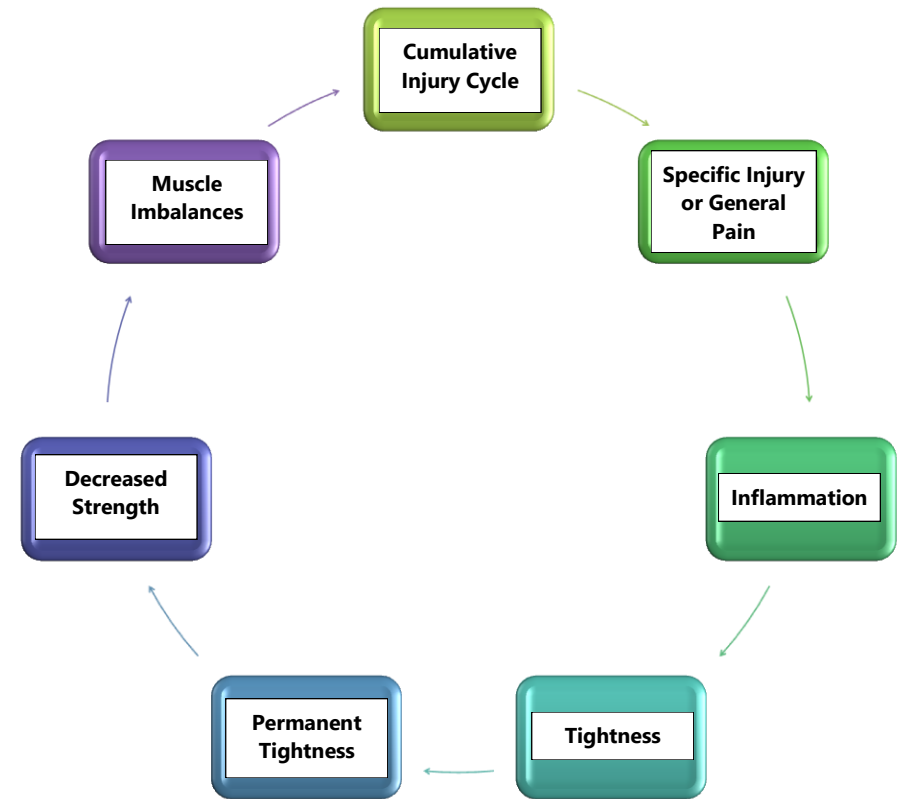
Some symptoms of shoulder impingement include:

- Aches in the shoulder or upper arm
- Aches down into your elbow
- Sharp pain when reaching for something
- Decreased range of motion over time
- Weakness in the shoulder and arm

Most rotator cuff tears begin as untreated impingement.

Although it is the most common shoulder problem, it's also the one people don't pay much attention to because they only feel pain when the structures are being pinched. But shoulder impingement is actually the most serious kind of shoulder problem because it's what ultimately damages the rotator cuff. Getting treated early on for shoulder impingement is the best way to prevent a rotator cuff tear. Physical therapy is an effective treatment method for this condition.

Cumulative Cycle of Injury



What is the Cumulative Cycle of Injury?

This cycle starts when you sustain an injury from a specific event or start to experience pain. That injury or general pain leads to inflammation and/or muscle tightness. If those last for more than 24 hours, then adhesions or tightness in the tissues become permanent. By permanent, we mean they don't fully heal and they won't heal on their own. This causes decreased strength, which leads to muscle imbalances. Injured muscles can't fully regain their strength. This is the cumulative cycle, meaning it's easier for you to sustain an injury again because you have never fully healed and the process repeats itself. **This cycle can easily occur in a hypermobile, unsteady joint like the shoulder, which is why it's so important to handle a shoulder problem right away.**