

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ROTATOR CUFF DISEASE

In the Clinic
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What Is Rotator Cuff Disease?

Rotator cuff disease is a very common cause of shoulder pain. The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that allow the shoulder joint to move. Rotator cuff pain is common in people who perform repeated overhead movements with their arms in their jobs or sports. Rotator cuff pain is also more common in older people.

What Are the Warning Signs?

Rotator cuff disease symptoms include:

- Pain in the shoulder area that usually gets worse with overhead movement
- Pain that is worse at night, especially when lying on the side that hurts
- Weakness or stiffness in the arm or shoulder

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and any exercises or activities that could be related to your shoulder.
- A physical exam will be performed. The exam will check for pain or tenderness in the shoulder with certain movements. Your doctor will also check your range of motion by asking you to move your arm in different ways.
- Imaging tests, like ultrasonography or MRI, are not usually needed to diagnose rotator cuff disease. Talk to your doctor before having one of these tests.

How Is It Treated?

- Early treatment includes cutting down on some activities that involve the shoulder.
- Your doctor may prescribe medicines to help with pain and swelling in the shoulder joint.
- Physical therapy and exercise programs may help reduce pain and build strength.
- For patients with severe pain, a steroid injection in the shoulder may be given.
- Surgery is only needed in rare cases. Talk with your doctor about your options if other non surgical treatments have not helped.

Questions for My Doctor

- What exercises can I do at home to help with the pain?
- Are there any activities I need to avoid?
- What kind of over-the-counter medicines can I take for pain?
- What can I expect from physical therapy?
- Will I ever need surgery?
- How can I prevent this from getting worse?



Bottom Line

- Rotator cuff disease is a common cause of shoulder pain. Rotator cuff pain is common in people who perform repeated overhead movements with their arms in their jobs or sports. It is also more common in older people.
- Pain in the shoulder that is usually worse with movement or at night is the most common symptom. Some people also have weakness in their arm and shoulder.
- Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and perform a physical exam. The physical exam will check for pain with certain movements and range of motion.
- Treatment may include: limiting certain movements or exercises, medicines to help with pain and swelling, and physical therapy. Surgery is only needed in rare cases.

For More Information



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Medline Plus:

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000438.htm

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons:

<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00032>

American Academy of Family Physicians:

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/exercise-fitness/injury-rehab/rotator-cuff-exercises.html>