

What is Rotator Cuff Tendinitis?

Tendinitis can affect people of any age, but is more common among adults who do a lot of sports or participate in activities that require extending the arm over the head.

Elderly individuals are also susceptible to tendinitis because our tendons tend to lose their elasticity and become weaker as we get older. Also, as we age our posture changes which places stresses on these tendons and the space they run through.

Symptoms

The symptoms of rotator cuff tendinitis tend to get worse over time. Initial symptoms may be relieved with rest, but the symptoms can later become constant. Symptoms that go past the elbow usually indicate another problem.

Symptoms of rotator cuff tendinitis include:

- Pain and swelling in the front of the shoulder and side of the arm
- Pain triggered by raising or lowering the arm
- A clicking sound when raising the arm
- Stiffness
- Pain that causes you to wake from sleep
- Pain when reaching behind the back
- A loss of mobility and strength in the affected arm

Treatment

- **Cold and Heat Therapy.** Ice or heat on the shoulder for 15 to 20 minutes at a time can often reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Rest.** Simply avoiding any movement or activity that causes discomfort can calm inflamed tissues and strained muscles.
- **Medications.** Take over the counter, anti-inflammatory medications, (NSAIDS), to relieve pain and reduce swelling and inflammation.



- **Physical Therapy.** Your doctor may also refer you to a physical therapist. Physical therapy will initially consist of stretching and other passive exercises to help restore range of motion and ease pain. Manual techniques and modalities may also be used to aid in tendon healing. Once the pain is under control, your physical therapist will teach you exercises to help regain strength in your arm and shoulder.
- **Shoulder Surgery.** Shoulder surgery may be recommended for some shoulder problems including a torn rotator cuff. Thanks to recent advances in techniques and technology, many shoulder surgeries can be done arthroscopically. Arthroscopy allows the surgeon to see and work inside the joint through a few small incisions, and is most often an outpatient procedure.

Shoulder Self-Care

There are several things you can do to help reduce pain from rotator cuff tendinitis. These techniques can also help prevent rotator cuff tendinitis or another flare-up of pain.

- Shoulder self-care includes:
 - Using good posture while sitting
 - Avoiding lifting your arms repetitively over your head
 - Taking breaks from repetitive activities
 - Avoiding sleeping on the same side every night
 - Avoiding carrying a bag on only one shoulder
 - Carrying things close to your body