

Impingement Syndrome

Description of Injury :

Impingement Syndrome/Shoulder Bursitis – General Information

There are many potential causes of shoulder pain and impingement syndrome is one of the more common. Impingement syndrome of the shoulder occurs when one of the rotator cuff muscles and/or a bursa within the shoulder is compressed under a bone called the acromion as the arm is lifted overhead. There are many factors that may contribute to impingement including arthritis, an abnormally shaped acromion, shoulder instability, rotator cuff weakness and repetitive activity. Impingement syndrome is common in individuals who play sports that involve overhead motions like swimming, tennis, or throwing. It is also common to occupations where overhead activity can be repetitive such as construction or painting.

Symptoms

The primary symptom of impingement syndrome is pain on the top or front portion of your shoulder. This pain can be felt with activity and at rest. The pain will generally increase when you lift your arm over your head. The pain may also increase at night. Your shoulder may feel weak at times, especially when it is sore. The pain may lead to a restriction in your range of motion.

Making the Diagnosis

Shoulder impingement syndrome is made after a detailed evaluation by a healthcare provider. X-rays or other imaging (such as an MRI) may be taken as needed to make your diagnosis.

In some cases, your physician may inject your shoulder to help establish your diagnosis and reduce your pain symptoms.

Treatment

Treatment options include:

- Applying ice to the shoulder to help reduce the pain. Apply the ice packs for 15-20 minutes every 2-4 hours until the pain has subsided
- Acetaminophen may be taken to reduce the amount of pain. Ibuprofen or other anti-inflammatory medications may be taken at the discretion of your physician
- Rehabilitation exercises are effective at treating this condition by helping to strengthen your rotator cuff muscles and stabilize your shoulder blade
- An injection may help to relieve your symptoms if you do not respond to conservative treatments
- If non-surgical treatment does not remove your pain, a physician may recommend surgery

Recovery Time Frame

The recovery timeline will depend on multiple factors. The severity of your injury, your age, overall health, and whether or not you have injured your shoulder before will all impact the recovery. It is important that you avoid activities that aggravate your pain until you have had the time to heal and rehabilitate your shoulder. Continuing to perform activities that aggravate your pain may worsen your injury and prolong your recovery.

Return to Regular Activities

Recovery time will vary between individuals. Return to your regular activity or sport can happen safely when your shoulder has fully recovered. If you return too soon, full recovery may be delayed and you may cause further damage or worsen your injury.

You may safely return to your activities when you have accomplished the following:

- You have achieved pain-free, full range of motion with the injured shoulder
- Your shoulder strength has returned to normal matching the opposite unaffected side
- You have achieved full function so that you are able to perform the specific motions and actions required for your sport

Prevention Strategies



- Strengthening your rotator cuff and shoulder stabilizing muscles will help to prevent another injury
- Be sure to warm up properly and stretch before your activities
- If your shoulder starts to hurt during these activities, you may need to slow down until the pain goes away