

MORE ABOUT THE SHOULDER

Last week when we began our class on shoulder problems I tried to give you an overview of what we think of when we are seeing a patient in the clinic with shoulder pain. The common causes are muscle strain, inflammation (tendinitis and bursitis) and impingement. We described these conditions and touched on their treatment.

But what if the shoulder doesn't respond to treatment or gets worse? Then we have to think that you have a very stubborn strain or bursitis condition or maybe something worse.

If you had come to the clinic, an x-ray of your shoulder would have been done already and most likely arthritis would have been ruled out. Remember, how I said pure shoulder arthritis is pretty rare.

It is always best to have an accurate diagnosis. Treatment can be ineffective without a correct diagnosis.

I might decide that you need a special type of x-ray study such as MRI or arthrogram (dye test with plain x-rays) to help me make the right diagnosis. MRI ordinarily does not involve any injection. An arthrogram is a test where contrast fluid is injected into the shoulder joint.

These studies can help determine if the person has a partial or complete tear of the rotator cuff, which is a more serious condition.

The shoulder may also have lost motion and the person hardly realized it because they were not using it and were protecting it. This is sometimes referred to as a frozen shoulder.

When a rotator cuff tear appears on the MRI study it can be partial (not all the way through the substance of the cuff tendons) or complete, showing a pretty large hole.

Partial tears of the rotator cuff, frozen shoulder and stubborn tendinitis often respond to good physical therapy such as we have at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. Complete tears of the rotator cuff often need surgery, but more on that in another class!

Dr. Haverbush would be happy to evaluate and treat your shoulder problem or any other orthopaedic condition at Lakeview Community Wellness Center.

Approaching clinic dates are Friday, March 7 and Friday, March 21, 2008 at 1:30 PM.

Please call 989-463-6092 for an appointment.

Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.