

Impingement

This will be the last topic in our short three week course on your shoulder ailments. There are lots more things to present, but after this Impingement article we'll go on to other topics.

Patients don't ordinarily use the word Impingement to describe a shoulder problem, but doctors often do so it's good to call it that so you'll recognize the term.

Think of your shoulder like a ball and socket with a bony shelf sitting on top of it. The bony "shelf" is called the acromion and is what you feel when you lay your hand on top of the opposite shoulder.

Under the shelf and on top of the ball is a lot of stuff that can get pinched (for a variety of reasons). This pinching or compression of the tissues between the shelf and the ball is termed Impingement.

In its early stages it can be a rather mild inflammation that you can manage yourself with range of motion stretching exercises, Ben Gay or Theragesic, heat/ice and Advil.

It may subside with the above treatment in which case you wouldn't even come to see me.

If it continues for awhile and does not seem to be going away, that's where I come in.

See if you remember what comes next. History, exam, plain x-rays. You did remember! Great.

Everyone whose shoulder hurts doesn't need an MRI (fortunately!).

You might, but there is a lot that goes into the decision that your doctor or I have to decide.

Further treatment could include one or more of the following; Prescription anti-inflammatory medication, injection of medication into the shoulder and possibly physical therapy.

As a last resort if conservative treatment didn't help, some patients have chosen to have surgery to try to relieve the jamming together or impingement of the shoulder tissues.

This can be effective in relieving the condition of Impingement and like any surgery should not be considered lightly or done before conservative treatment is tried.

And it might take 4 - 8 weeks to get over the surgery, so don't have surgery before trying other things.

Impingement can be present with other shoulder problems too, but I wanted to explain it by itself to make it less confusing.

Shoulder problems or any other Orthopaedic Surgery condition can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. Clinic dates are March 21, April 4, April 18, 2008. Please call 989-463-6092 for an appointment.