

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

Shoulder Impingement. What's That?

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Shoulder problems are among the most frequent problems I see at the LCWC Orthopaedic Clinic and the office in Alma.

Impingement is one of the most common causes of pain in the shoulder. It results from pressure on the rotator cuff tendons by a portion of the shoulder blade called the acromion when you lift the arm.

Rotator Cuff

The rotator cuff is a collection of tendons, which links 4 muscles. The rotator cuff tendons cover the ball of the shoulder. They work together to lift and rotate the shoulder.

The Acromion

The acromion is the front edge of the shoulder blade. It sits over and in front of the ball (humeral head). As you lift the arm, the acromion rubs or "impinges" on the surface of the rotator cuff tendons. This causes pain, inflammation and limited movement.

Impingement Risk

Impingement is common in both young athletes and middle aged people.

- Swimming
- Baseball
- Tennis
- Repetitive lifting over head
- Paper hanging
- Construction work
- Painting
- Minor trauma
- Some shoulders have no apparent cause.

Symptoms

- Beginning symptoms may be mild. Patients frequently do not seek treatment at an early stage.

- Minor pain present both with activity and rest.
- Pain radiates from front of shoulder to the side of the arm.
- Sudden pain with lifting or reaching.
- Athletes in overhead sports may have pain when throwing or serving a tennis ball.
- Local swelling or tenderness in front of shoulder
- Pain and stiffness when the arm is lifted or lowered.
- Pain at night.
- Decreased strength and motion.
- Hard to place arm behind you.
- Can advance to a "frozen shoulder".

Diagnosis

I always take a good history and examine the shoulder, neck and arm thoroughly.

Then plain x-rays are taken.

I might ask that an MRI or arthrogram be done.

Non Surgical Treatment

Initial treatment is always conservative. Rest and avoid overhead activities. Advil or similar prescription or over the counter anti-inflammatory medication. Stretching exercises to improve range of motion and strength will help.

I may suggest a shoulder injection of a local anesthetic and a cortisone preparation. Supervised physical therapy is needed in some patients. Treatment may take several weeks or months.

Surgery

The goal is to remove pressure and create more space for the rotator cuff. In some patients it can be done arthroscopically and in others a small incision in front of the shoulder is needed. The front edge of the acromion bone is removed along with some tissue.

A sling is placed initially and followed by a rehab program based on the patient's need and the findings at surgery.

Thanks for your support of our Orthopaedic Clinic at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. I am happy to see all Orthopaedic Surgery problems at LCWC or at the office 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan. Please call 989-463-6092 to schedule an appointment at either place.

Future LCWC Clinic dates are April 2, April 16 and April 30, 2010.

Log on to www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for answers to all your questions.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free,
functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush