

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Treatment of the Painful Shoulder

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At the end of last week's "class" we touched on the stiff and painful shoulder. That would be a good place to continue.

Frozen Shoulder

I don't know when the stiff shoulder was given this name, but it certainly applies. It can seem to come out of nowhere, it grabs you. The truth is it had been coming on slowly and you hardly knew what was happening. You have met, unfortunately, frozen shoulder.

Inflammation and tissue changes from wear and tear have crept in and now your shoulder is stuck. A bad place to be. It feels like arthritis, but isn't. X-rays are usually completely normal. I would usually choose to start physical therapy and of course add pain and or anti-inflammatory medication.

If that is not getting any results I might decide you need "exam under anesthesia". It is done in the hospital as an outpatient procedure. In most cases the adhesions can be separated and the person begins to have less pain and movement returns to the shoulder. It is important to keep the shoulder moving yourself by prescribed exercises or the lack of motion can come back.

Rotator Cuff Problems

1. The rotator cuff is a collection of tendons that cover the ball of the shoulder and are extremely important in movement and strength in the shoulder.
2. Tendon inflammation or even partial tears of the tendon tissue can be treated with several non surgical means. It is my job to decide which way to treat!
3. Complete tearing of rotator cuff tendons is diagnosed by an MRI study. It ordinarily will require an operation to repair the tendons if the patient is having symptoms that are severe enough to require surgery. It is up to me to decide what is the best way to fix it. Sometimes it is arthroscopic and sometimes the tear is too large and complex to repair arthroscopically.
4. Some tears of the cuff are smaller, but nevertheless painful and many are like "the rotator cuff tear from hell" which are a

nightmare to fix. Tears can be shredded and retracted, in short a mess. I can get some idea about what things are like from the MRI, but looking at it in surgery is the best information. Some repairs are straight forward and considerable improvement is possible and in others you do what you can and have to see what happens.

"Doc, I thought I had arthritis."

Arthritis of the shoulder is an interesting subject that requires its own class so to speak. I thought I would wait till next week to cover that topic.

I sure hope you are learning things about your shoulder that will be of help to you or your family. I'll do my best to give you all the information you need.

For more information about the shoulder and things I treat in the office and hospital log on to our teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com / Your Orthopaedic Connection.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

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

Dr. Haverbush