

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Treating Shoulder Pain Without Surgery

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

I have always felt the most basic part of my work as an Orthopaedic Surgeon is to decide who can be treated without surgery and who will require surgery to recover.

This is not always easy to figure out. You can see how important it is though, because an incorrect diagnosis may lead to unnecessary surgery.

A prime example of what we are taking about is the shoulder.

Behold the shoulder!

The most movable, vulnerable and complex of all the joints. It is composed of the humerus (arm bone), scapula (shoulder blade), clavicle (collar bone) with a huge array of muscles, tendons and ligaments holding it all together.

Common Problems

- Tendon or bursa inflammation
- Shoulder moving partly out of joint (subluxation)
- Frozen shoulder
- Partial tearing of rotator cuff tendons
- Full tear of rotator cuff tendons

Conservative Care

This should always be uppermost in my mind. And it is! Once you do surgery you can't take it back. Now, I do a lot of shoulder surgery, but most shoulder problems do not require surgery and respond well to "conservative treatment".

Essential Components

Rest it.
Don't reach upward.
Lift only light loads (a few pounds).
Keep elbow below shoulder level.

Don't vacuum or rake the yard.

Ice and Heat

Ice for ten minutes with a cold pack.

Apply heat for ten minutes after the ice.

A hot shower can help.

Medication - Anti-inflammatory

Advil

Aleve

Other prescription anti-inflammatory medication

Not Tylenol

Physical Therapy

You need a prescription from a physician.

Tailored exercises based on your problem.

Some component of range of motion

Strengthening

A good homework program directed by the therapist

Then What?

The majority of shoulder problems we see in the office will respond to what you have just read. You need to give it 4 - 6 weeks unless you are getting worse. If so, re-evaluation is indicated and some of our patients do require surgery to improve. You can rarely go wrong treating things conservatively in the beginning.

For answers to all your orthopaedic and musculoskeletal questions consult our office teaching website www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which can also take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection.

The goal of our office 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