

SHOULDER PAIN

A PRIMER

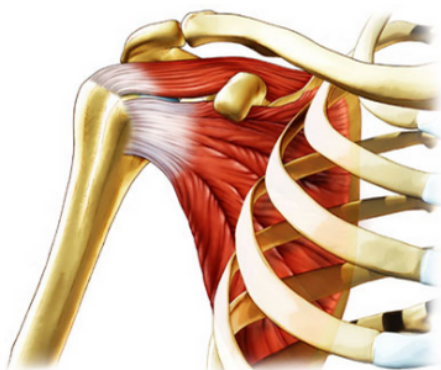
Shoulder pain can include a few different diagnoses where treatment can differ. A physical examination can help provide a specific diagnosis. Rotator cuff problems, frozen shoulder, and shoulder osteoarthritis are the most common diagnoses in the shoulder.

EARLY

Continue to stay active. You can minimize painful movements, but only briefly. Early imaging isn't necessary unless unusual symptoms exist like changes in weight, fever, loss of muscle function, muscle wasting, or you have a recent history of cancer.

ANATOMY

The rotator cuff is a group of 4 small muscles that control and stabilize the shoulder. They are prone to overuse with too much weight or repetitive stress. Just like any tendon, they can usually recover.



STRUCTURE

The shoulder joint is a ball-and-socket joint designed to be very mobile. But, this means it lacks stability. In some conditions, stiffness becomes a problem, while in others, the shoulder becomes too mobile and can cause pain.

TREATMENT

The focus should target YOUR specific goals and get you independent with a home program. This may include:

- Exercises to regain lost shoulder range of motion
- Exercises to improve rotator cuff strength and control
- Exercises to improve shoulder blade strength and control
- Understanding how to use your shoulder safely and effectively
- Stay at work

PROGNOSIS

This varies. Some types of shoulder pain, like mild rotator cuff problems, resolve within weeks. Frozen shoulder can take up to 18 months. Shoulder arthritis can improve a lot, but then has to be managed to minimize recurrences.