



University Orthopaedic Center

Sports Medicine & Athletic Injuries Tip Sheet



Your Shoulder & You...

The shoulder has the greatest range of motion of any joint in the body. It is our shoulders that allow us to put our hands where they need to be for work, play, and all of our daily activities. To manage this, the shoulder has to have the right balance of strength, flexibility, and stability. Loss of this balance can lead to pain and injury. Maintaining this balance through exercises aimed at stretching and strengthening can help avoid shoulder problems.

Injuries can occur due to a fall or a specific trauma to the shoulder or repetitive stress on the shoulder or in "overhead" sports, baseball, softball, tennis & swimming.

To see how the shoulder works, go to patient education/ shoulder/ anatomy on the UOC website, www.universityorthopaedic.com.



Q. What is a torn rotator cuff?

A. The rotator cuff is a group of tendons and their related muscles that help keep the shoulder and upper arm bone securely placed in to the socket of the shoulder blade. The rotator cuff stabilizes the shoulder joint and helps you to raise and rotate your arms.

There are three stages of rotator cuff tears:

- A stage 1 tear is a partial tear less than 1 cm in size. It is accompanied by some pain following overhead arm movements, but range of motion is not limited.
- A stage 2 tear is a partial tear greater than 1 cm but less than 5 cm in length. Pain is common during and after overhead arm movements, as well as at night. It may be accompanied by a slight decrease in range of motion.
- A stage 3 tear is a full tear greater than 5 cm in size. Stiffness, weakness, and pain occur during and after overhead arm movements and during sleep. There may be a slight to severe decrease in range of motion in the shoulder.

Rotator cuff injuries are among the most common shoulder injuries. When caught early and treated properly, most patients with rotator cuff injuries do not need surgery. Exercises & lifestyle changes can be very helpful in preventing rotator cuff injuries.

