

Tips, Strategies and News You Can Use To Achieve Optimum Health...For Life!

Dec 2006 Issue

## Shoulder Impingement

# The Most Common Reason For Shoulder Pain

If you've ever had shoulder pain or discomfort, you're not alone. Many people - especially older adults - suffer from shoulder problems. There are many causes, but impingement is one of the most common. Impingement occurs when the rotator cuff is pinched by a part of the shoulder blade (scapula) as the arm is lifted.

I'm sure you've heard the term "rotator cuff" before. The **rotator cuff** is a group of four muscles - the supraspinatus, the infraspinatus, the subscapularis, and the teres minor. Unlike your hip joint which is a "ball and socket", the shoulder has no such structure. Instead, these four muscles cover the "ball" of the shoulder (head of the

humerus, which is a bone in the upper arm). These muscles work in tandem to lift and rotate the shoulder.

And here's where the trouble starts. The acromion is the front edge of the shoulder blade. It sits over the front of the humeral head. As the arm is lifted, the acromion rubs or "impinges" on the surface of the supraspinatus muscle of the rotator cuff group. This **causes pain and limits movement.**

Repetitive movement (or "pushing through the pain") will often result in bursitis (inflammation of the bursa overlying the rotator cuff). Tendonitis (inflammation of the tendon) of the rotator cuff tendons may also result. In some circumstances, repeti-



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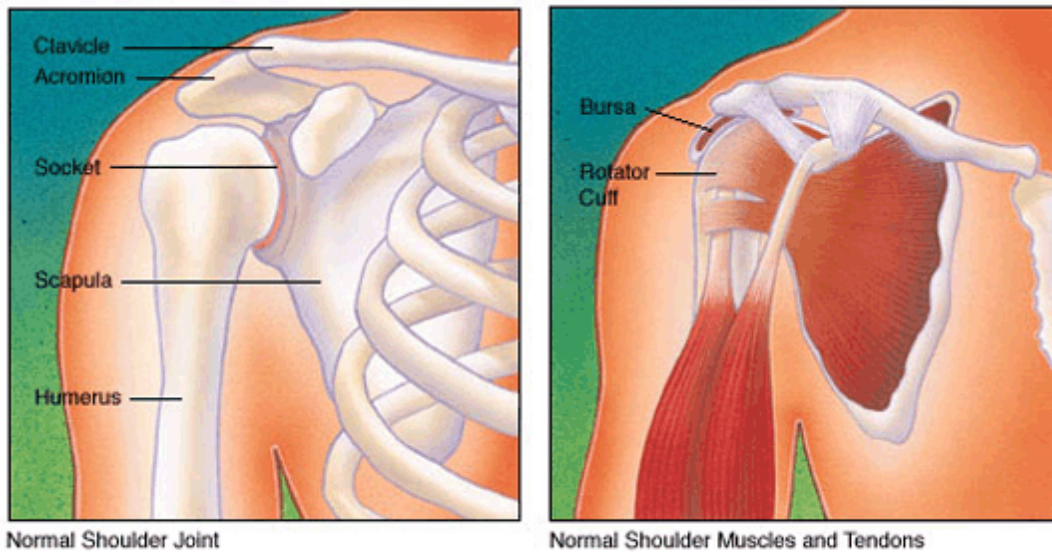


Figure 1: Normal anatomy of the shoulder

tive impingement may result in a partial tear of the rotator cuff. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you need to talk to your doctor.

#### Risk Factors/Prevention

Impingement is common in both young athletes and middle-aged people. Young athletes who use their arms overhead for swimming, baseball and tennis are particularly vulnerable. Also, those who perform repetitive lifting or overhead activities using the arm such as paper hanging, construction or painting are also susceptible to impingement pain. Finally, pain may also

develop as the result of minor trauma or spontaneously with no apparent cause. In older patients, it may occur as a result of poor posture - especially in women with osteoporosis.

#### Symptoms Of Shoulder Impingement

Luckily, beginning symptoms may be mild. However, patients frequently do not seek treatment at this early stage because the pain has not yet reached a level where it is severe. In fact, you may first be aware of minor pain that's present both with activity and at rest. You may also have pain radiating from the front of the shoulder to the side of the arm.

Or you may notice sudden pain with lifting and reaching movement. All of these symptoms could be a sign of shoulder impingement.

Impingement commonly causes local swelling and tenderness in the front of the shoulder, pain and stiffness when you attempt to lift your arm and pain when you lower your arm from an elevated position.

As the problem progresses, you may have pain at night. Strength and motion will be diminished. You may have difficulty with activities that place the arm behind the back, such as buttoning or zippering. And in advanced cases, loss of motion may progress to a "frozen shoulder." In acute

bursitis, the shoulder may be severely tender, with all movement limited and painful.

## Diagnosis

To diagnose shoulder impingement, an orthopaedic surgeon reviews the symptoms and physically examines the shoulder. He or she may need X-rays. A special X-ray will sometimes show a small bone spur on the front edge of the acromion.

At that point, the doctor may request further imaging studies, such as an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). These can show fluid or inflammation in the bursa and rotator cuff. In some cases, partial tearing of the rotator cuff will be identified.

## Treatment Options

Initial treatment is conservative. The doctor may suggest that you rest and avoid overhead activities. He or she might prescribe a course of oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication.

Many patients benefit from injection of local anesthetic and a cortisone preparation to the affected area. The doctor might also recommend a program of supervised physical therapy. For instance, stretching exercises can help improve range of

motion in a stiff shoulder. Also, posture re-education might be taught. Scapular strengthening exercises may also be performed. Treatment may take several weeks to months. Many patients experience a gradual improvement and return to function.

## Treatment Options: Surgical

When conservative treatment does not relieve pain, the doctor may recommend surgery. The goal of surgery is to remove the impingement and create more space for the rotator cuff. This allows the humeral head to move freely in the subacromial space and to lift the arm without pain. The most common surgical treatment is subacromial decompression or anterior acromioplasty. This may be performed by either arthroscopic or open techniques.

In an arthroscopic procedure, two or three small puncture wounds are made. The joint is then examined through a fiberoptic scope connected to a television camera. Finally, small instruments are used to remove bone and soft tissue.

Open surgery requires placement of a small incision in the front of the shoulder. This allows for direct visualization of the acromion and rotator cuff.

In most cases the front

(anterior) edge of the acromion is removed along with some of the bursal tissue. The surgeon may also treat other conditions present in the shoulder at the time of impingement surgery. These can include acromioclavicular arthritis, biceps tendonitis or a partial rotator cuff tear.

## Rehabilitation

After surgery, the arm may be placed in a sling for a short period of time. This allows for early healing. As soon as the patient is comfortable, the sling can be removed and exercise and use of the arm can begin.

The surgeon will most likely refer a patient to physical therapy for rehab. Based on your needs and the findings at surgery will determine a particular physical therapy protocol. This will include exercises to regain range of motion of the shoulder and strength of the arm. It may take two to four months to achieve full range of motion and complete relief of pain.

Yes, shoulder impingement can be a painful condition. However, like most ailments, if caught early, many treatment options can be effective at alleviating the pain associated with this very common condition.

--Robert Inglis, MPT, CSCS  
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# Shopping 'Til You Drop' Isn't Just Bad For Your Wallet - It Can Hurt Your Back As Well!



**T**he holidays can be stressful physically as well as emotionally.

Carrying large packages, shopping for many hours at a time, stooping over shelves (not to mention fighting off other bargain-seekers!) can be very taxing physically. And this can lead to back and neck problems in short order.

My recommendations for surviving the holiday season without back and neck pain all comes down to **good body mechanics** and **proper lifting techniques**.

People who don't normally stand in lines for long periods of time, stoop over shelves, lift and carry heavy packages are at particular risk of back and neck injuries. Especially if they're sedentary most of the time, such as office workers. Every year after the holidays I see an increase in back, shoulder and neck injuries. So, here are my tips for avoiding those injuries in the first place:

## Holiday Lifting Tips To Protect Your Back, Shoulders And Neck

- Don't carry too much weight

for long periods of time. Although some shopping bags may be designed to carry, say, 50 lbs., it doesn't mean you are designed to carry 50 pounds for long periods of time! Instead of carrying many bags around while shopping, make more frequent trips to your vehicle to drop off packages.

- Know how much you're lifting before you pick it up. Gauge the weight of packages or boxes with your foot. Try sliding the package across the floor before you pick it up. If it **does** seem too much for you, ask for a few smaller boxes instead of one big box. This puts less stress on your shoulders, neck and back.

- Lift with your legs, not your back. Don't bend over a box or package to lift it. Instead, lift by standing close to the package, bending your legs and keeping your back straight. Use your legs.

- Get it checked out early. If you're one of the many who does experience back pain during the holidays, get it checked as soon as possible. Many chronic conditions can be halted with early treatment **before** they progress into bigger problems. Call me if you experience any

pain in your back, neck or shoulders this holiday season.

- Keep it balanced. If possible, keep the weight of packages you carry **equal on both sides of your body**. This will improve your balance and help avoid the jarring effects of one side carrying too much weight.

- Leave the big purse at home. A weighty purse just adds to your burden. Some purses I've seen weigh five to ten pounds! Instead, I recommend using a small backpack or fanny-pack. This allows your hips to share in the workload and protects your shoulders and back.

- Get the right shoes. I discussed how to select the right shoe two newsletters ago. For marathon shopping, I suggest either walking or running shoes. High heels and dress shoes offer very little shock absorption and can lead to injuries; especially when carrying heavy packages.

- Cart it, don't carry it. You may want to try using a shopping cart to get heavy packages to your car.

**Follow these tips to avoid back and neck pain this holiday season!**

# Boosting Your Immunity

In this era of bird flu, AIDS, and the West Nile virus, more of us are concerned about a healthy immune system than ever before. Boosting immunity through nutrition, exercise, and other lifestyle changes is as simple as maintaining healthy habits.

For example: Whether one catches a cold after a sufficient amount of the virus has entered the body depends on many factors that effect the immune system, such as:

- Old Age
- Cigarette smoking
- Mental stress
- Poor nutrient intake
- Lack of sleep

One of the best ways to reduce sickness is through **daily exercise** at a moderate intensity (brisk walking, cycling, sports and swimming). We are exposed to viruses every day. Once our immune system is suppressed, these viruses go on the offensive. The best way to keep



your immune defenses strong is to follow these guidelines:

- Take a quality multivitamin and mineral supplement. Almost all nutrients in the diet play a crucial role in maintaining an "optimal" immune response. That's because every vitamin and mineral has a link to the immune system. Nutritional supplements can be very effective at boosting immunity in frail individuals. Adults experiencing unusual mental and physical stress may experience some benefit from "advanced supplements" for countering downturns in immunity.

These supplements include Omega 3 fish oils, B-glucan, ginkgo biloba, curcumin and quercetin.

- Keep life stresses to a minimum. I know this is easier "said than done", but mental stress has been **linked to an increased risk sore throats and the common cold**.

- Eat a well balanced diet to keep vitamin and mineral supplies in the body at optimal levels.

- Avoid overtraining and chronic fatigue.

- Exercise moderately on most days of the week. Moderate exercise has been proven to improve the ability of the immune system to detect and destroy viruses and bacteria. However, you should not exercise when you are ill or have a fever. This can lead to more severe symptoms, relapse, and long term fatigue.

- Get an adequate amount of sleep on a regular basis. Sleep disruption has been linked to suppressed immunity.

- Avoid rapid weight loss because low energy intake has been linked to negative immune changes. This is yet another reason why “crash diets” do more harm than good.

- Avoid putting hands to the eyes and nose. Touching the mucous membranes of your eyes, nose and mouth is the primary way of introducing viruses into the body. Also, wash your hands thoroughly after touching items in public areas.

- Influenza vaccination is recommended.

- Use a carbohydrate beverage before, during, and after heavy training. A carbohydrate beverage will lower the impact of stress hormones on the immune system. It also allows you to replenish your supply of muscle glycogen quickly, in order to rebound from your workout and start the recovery process.

## Health Trivia - Test Your Health And Fitness Knowledge!

This month's quiz is full of questions from the main article on shoulder impingement. See how many of these you can get right...**without** peeking! Good luck!

**QUESTION #1:** Which of the following is NOT a muscle found in the “rotator cuff”?

- a.) supraspinatus
- b.) infraspinatus
- c.) humerus
- d.) subscapularis

**QUESTION #2:** True or False: Surgery is the only effective treatment for shoulder impingement

- a.) TRUE
- b.) FALSE

**QUESTION #3:** Shoulder Impingement is aggravated / caused by the following movements except:

- a.) throwing a ball
- b.) painting a wall

- c.) kicking a soccer ball
- d.) swimming

**QUESTION #4:** True or False: The shoulder has a “ball and socket” joint (called the rotator cuff) just like the hip.

- a.) TRUE
- b.) FALSE

**QUESTION #5:** Impingement is common in the following people except:

- a.) Young athletes
- b.) Older people with osteoporosis
- c.) Middle-aged contractors
- d.) Bed-ridden people who do not use their arms as much as they should

**Answers:**

1) c 2) b 3) c 4) b 5) d

From Our Healthy Kitchen:

# Savory Shrimp Gumbo

Here is a healthy creole dish the whole family will enjoy. With tons of complex carbs, lots of fiber and low in fat, this recipe will feed a family of four. Add hot pepper sauce to spice it up!



## Ingredients

- 24 ounces small shrimp
- 4 cups celery, sliced
- 4 cups onion, chopped
- 6 cups tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cups frozen okra
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels
- 5 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 2 tsp hot pepper sauce (or add more if you like)
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/4 tsp celery seed
- 1 1/4 cups lemon and lime flavored water
- 2 tsp lemon herb seasoning
- 1 tsp paprika

## Directions

- 1.) In a medium non-stick saute pan, **heat olive oil.**
- 2.) Add celery, onion, tomatoes, okra, corn, hot pepper sauce, garlic, chili powder and celery seed. Cook until vegetables are tender.
- 3.) Mix in the shrimp, paprika, lemon herb seasoning and water.
- 4.) Simmer 3-5 minutes until the shrimp are cooked. Spoon into a medium bowl to serve. Enjoy!

## How To Guarantee You Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables Every Day



**I**t seems like every day we hear new a new report that confirms how **critical** it is to eat the right amount of fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables contain anti-carcinogens, fiber, healthy carbs, vitamins, minerals, anti-oxidants and more. Everybody knows they're good for you. The only problem is...

"How Do You Find Time To Eat All These Fruits And Veggies!?"

If you're like me, you find it almost impossible to consume the amount

of fruits and vegetables that is recommended. With our busy lifestyles, it's almost impossible. You'd be chopping veggies and picking fruit all day! Besides, that many fruits and vegetables every day can be downright expensive.

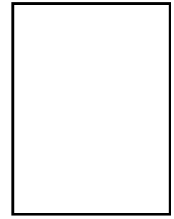
There is now an easy solution. And it's something I highly recommend. It's a supplement called "Juice Plus". Juice Plus is **the most affordable way you can get all your fruits and vegetables every single day. With Juice Plus, you can feel confident you're giving your body everything it needs for proper functioning.** All that "good stuff" is compressed into

a tiny supplement you take in the morning. How easy is that? To find out more, just click on the following link:

<http://www.juiceplus.com/+ri00519>

That link gives you all the information you need to know about getting your fruits and veggies the easy way. Plus, you can get Juice Plus shipped right to your door with no hassle. Go ahead and visit that website now - I've even arranged for you to receive a special Preferred Patient discount! But it's only good for a limited time - so **click now!**

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**Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays  
from the staff of Physical Therapy Specialists!**

## **Tis The Season For Physical Therapy**

If you're experiencing aches or pains, don't fret! Why? Because **NOW** is the time to come in and take advantage of physical therapy treatment! Most likely, your insurance deductibles have been met for the year...which means **you don't pay as much out-of-pocket!** That makes this the very best time of the year

to get some good physical therapy. Get a jump on your aches and pains! Call NOW to re-activate your physical therapy and get back on track! (And don't forget: You don't have to wait until your New Year's Resolution to get in shape, either! Call **NOW!**

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