

Shoulder Pain

information by Dr Saul Geffen

Shoulder pain occurs for a variety of reasons.

The comments here refer to shoulder pain due to 'rotator cuff' problems.

The shoulder is a very complex joint. Its job is to hold the arm in position and allow us to manipulate objects over a very wide range of motion. There are actually four joints in and around the shoulder. The 'AC joint' at end of collar bone, the sternoclavicular joint, the arm bone where it joins the shoulder blade (GH), and the shoulder blade at the back of the chest. Shoulder pain may be referred from other structures e.g. the neck.

Muscles (which then form tendons) hold the shoulder in position and move the arm. If your shoulder hurts severely when the arm is lifted away from your body (especially when under load), it is a sign that you are causing further damage.

Treatment: After accurate diagnosis by examination and investigations

You should do some general exercises such as running/walking in water, regular walks, yoga and bike riding; as well as using exercise equipment in the gym.

The physiotherapist and Doctor will give you specific rehabilitation exercises. Do these at least 2x per day, every day. Many people find they have less pain after completing exercises.



Rehab exercises fall into 3 broad types:

1. Stretching exercises to increase and maintain flexibility
2. Strengthening exercises to build up muscle power; especially in the 'rotator cuff'
3. Control exercises to help your posture and co-ordination

Physical Therapy

The shoulder is a difficult area to treat; some therapists are better than others. **See the therapist I recommend.**

If you are seeing someone who just puts machines and/or hot packs on you, then you are wasting your time and money.

Medication

Many people find that anti-inflammatory medication helps and occasionally Panadeine is required in addition.

Lithotripsy is a new therapy for calcium build up available at the Holy Spirit Hospital (it is expensive).

Work

You should do work that DOES NOT aggravate your shoulder pain.

Surgery

Despite my best efforts, some people have a condition that requires surgery. If so, I will discuss with your GP who is the appropriate orthopedic surgeon.

Alternative Therapy (acupuncture, herbs, homeopathy etc) is a waste of money and time for rotator cuff problems.