

## Education

### Shoulder Injuries

#### What are shoulder injuries?

Injuries to the shoulder joint are common, especially in sports. They are often tough to diagnose because shoulder pain may stem from a mixture of bone, muscle, and joint damage. You may be given 3 different diagnoses when symptoms overlap. All could be correct.

Shoulder injuries are usually either a result of a sudden injury or an overuse injury that develops slowly. Sudden shoulder injuries could be broken bones, dislocations, sprains, or bruises. These can be caused by a direct fall onto an outstretched arm or from direct impact to the shoulder. The symptoms come on instantly with severe pain and tenderness. Swelling and lack of movement may also occur. People who play contact sports and sports where they may fall have a higher risk for these kinds of injuries.

Overuse injuries include bursitis, tendonitis and bone spurs. Overuse injuries develop slowly. Eventually, pain is felt during and after activity. People likely to suffer from overuse injuries are baseball pitchers, golfers, swimmers, and tennis and volleyball players. People who work with hand tools or do a lot of shoulder movement at work may also have these problems.

#### What is the treatment?

If your shoulder has just been injured while playing a sport or from an accident, put ice on your shoulder and see your health care provider right away. You should also see your provider if your shoulder hurts while doing daily activities or if it is painful to raise your arm above your head.

You can treat mild cases of shoulder pain with rest and ice. Put a cloth-covered ice pack on your shoulder for no more than 20 to 30 minutes every 3 or 4 hours for the first couple of days or after any activity. You can also take anti-inflammatory medicine as directed by your health care provider. If your shoulder muscles are tight, you can use moist heat on your shoulder for 20 to 30 minutes before stretching.

Overuse injuries are often treated with gentle exercises to build strength and restore range of motion to the joint. Your health care provider will tell you the right exercises to do. Physical therapy, moist heat, ultrasound, and stretching can also help.

#### How can I prevent shoulder injuries?

To prevent shoulder injuries:

- Do a proper warm-up before throwing activities.
- Learn how to fall properly. You should tuck and roll to avoid falling on an outstretched arm.
- Use proper form and posture when doing an activity or sport.
- When recovering from a shoulder injury, be sure to follow a conditioning program to develop strength and flexibility in and around the joint. Do range of motion exercises often during the day.

*Sports Medicine Advisor 2006.4; Copyright © 2006 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All Rights Reserved. Developed by McKesson Provider Technologies. This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*