

## Shoulder Pain

Shoulder pain can arise as a result of poor posture, repetitive tasks, injuries and “wear and tear” in the joint. It is a common source of pain due to the number of structures in the shoulder, and is often the source of pain coming from other regions (referred pain), especially the neck. Physiotherapy has been shown to be beneficial in diagnosing and treating shoulder problems.

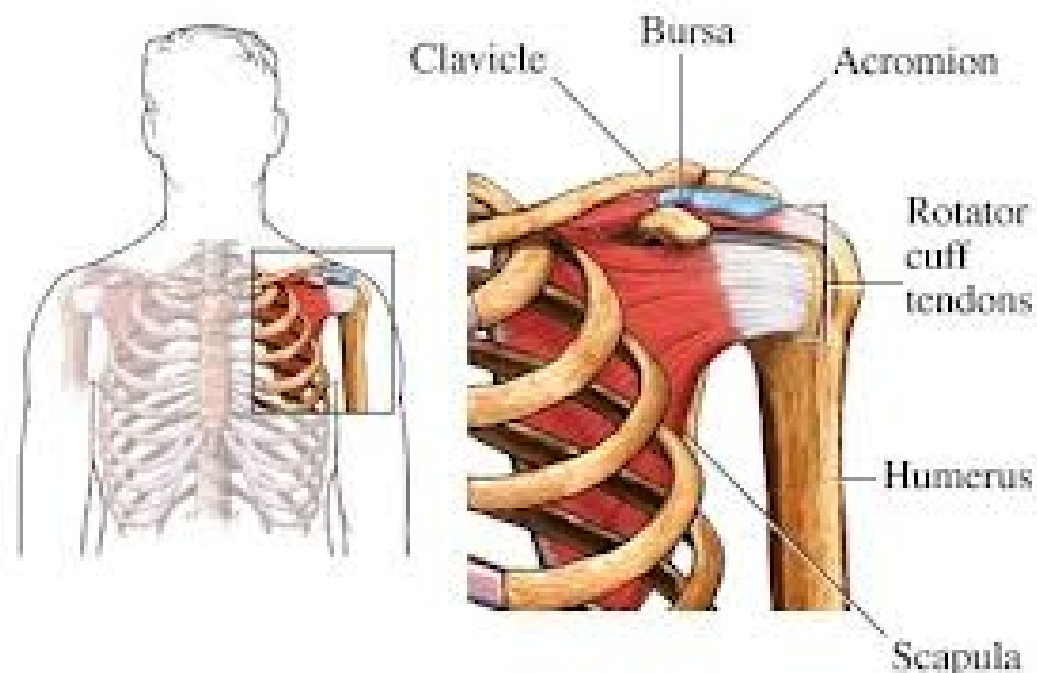
### What causes pain in the shoulder?

#### **Tendons**

The tendons in the shoulder known as the rotator cuff muscles help to form a strong supportive structure around the shoulder. Tendinosis (damage to the tendons) can occur due to such activities as playing sports, heavy lifting and repetitive tasks. If the tendons are inflamed they can cause an “impingement” whereby they compress on the bone at the top of the shoulder joint. This will cause pain on certain movements, typically reaching up or putting your coat on.

#### **Bursa**

Bursa are fluid filled sacks that protect structures from rubbing against bone. The shoulder bursae can cause impingement symptoms if it becomes irritated due to repetitive actions. It can cause pain when lying on that side, reaching your arm in certain directions, and in severe cases may cause pain when you are resting.



## **Frozen Shoulder**

Frozen shoulder occurs when the capsule surrounding the shoulder joint contracts and thickens. This can happen for no apparent reason although is more common in people with diabetes and women aged 40-60. A frozen shoulder comprises of 3 main stages:

- 1) Painful stage – gradually increasing pain
- 2) Frozen stage – increasing stiffness with the pain gradually easing
- 3) Thawing stage – reducing stiffness

Most people make a full recovery but the process can last between 18-24 months.

## **Arthritis**

Arthritis in the shoulder joint is not as commonly found as arthritis that affects the end of the collar bone where it meets the shoulder blade. It can lead to impingement symptoms and pain and stiffness on certain movements e.g. reaching.

## **Referred pain**

Although you may feel pain in the shoulder – nerves, muscles, joints and ligaments in the neck can refer pain into the shoulder. You may experience aching in your shoulder blade or your arm along with pins and needles. Muscle tightness resulting from repetitive movements and poor postures can also lead to pain and stiffness in the shoulder.

## What can I do to help myself?

- Pain relief can help to ease the pain and allow your muscles to relax. Speak to your GP or pharmacist about what to take.
- Heat or cold (see the information leaflet on this).
- Practice good posture instead of slumping and relax your shoulders.
- Try and keep your shoulder moving within your pain tolerance without overstretching.
- Modify your activities where possible to avoid movements that may be irritating your symptoms.
- Contact your physiotherapist for further advice.

## What can physiotherapy do?

Following an initial assessment your physiotherapist will be able to identify the source of your shoulder pain. Together you will form a treatment plan based on the understanding of your symptoms including advice and an exercise programme to help with your rehabilitation. Treatment techniques may include:

- Acupuncture for pain relief
- Exercises
- Manual therapy such as massage and mobilisations to the joint and tissues
- Advice on activity and posture
- Ultrasound
- Intra-articular steroid injection (performed at Roundwood Health Clinic by an experienced physiotherapist if your symptoms are constant, severe and affecting your sleep when appropriate).



Further information:

[www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk)

[www.shoulderdoc.co.uk](http://www.shoulderdoc.co.uk)

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