Rotator cuff tear

**Torn rotator cuffs:**

**Repaired rotator cuff:**

**Description**
A rotator cuff tear is characterized by pain and weakness of the shoulder due to tearing of the rotator cuff tendons and is often associated with inflammation of the bursa (subacromial bursa). The rotator cuff is a series of four muscles that surround the ball of the shoulder (humeral head). These muscles originate on the shoulder blade and attach to the humeral head. The main function of the rotator cuff is to maintain the humeral head in the center of the socket, especially during shoulder motion.

**Common signs and symptoms**
- Pain around the shoulder.
- Pain that is worse with shoulder motion, especially when reaching overhead or lifting.
- Aching when not using your arm; pain that often wakes you up at night.
- Loss of strength in the shoulder.
- Limited motion of the shoulder, especially when reaching behind or across your body.
- The shoulder may “pop” with movement.
- Bicep tendon pain and swelling that becomes worse with bending the elbow or lifting.

**Causes**
- Strain from sudden increase in the amount or intensity of activity.
- Direct blow or injury to the shoulder.

**Risk of further injury**
- Contact sports such as football, wrestling and boxing.
- Throwing or overhead sports such as baseball, tennis or volleyball.
- Weightlifting and bodybuilding.
- Heavy labor.
- Previous injury to rotator cuff.
• Poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility).
• Inadequate warm-up before activity.
• Inadequate protective equipment.
• Repeated cortisone injections.

Shoulder Arthroscopy Pre-Operative Instructions

Initial treatment
You will use medication and ice to relieve the pain, perform stretching and strengthening exercises, and modify the activity that causes pain or instability. These all can be done at home, although referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be recommended. An injection of cortisone to the area around the tendon (within the bursa) may also be given. Surgery may be performed arthroscopically or with an open incision. Return to full activity usually requires six to 12 months.

Pain control
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin, naproxen sodium, and ibuprofen may be taken to relieve pain, but do not take these within seven days prior to your surgery. Other minor pain relievers such as Tylenol®/acetaminophen are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, upset stomach or signs of an allergic reaction occur.

Pain medication is not usually prescribed for this condition. If your physician does prescribe pain medications, use it only as directed. You may also be given cortisone injections to reduce inflammation or anesthetics to temporarily relieve pain. There is a limit to the number of times cortisone may be given because it may weaken muscle and tendon tissue.

Swelling control
Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every two to three hours. Apply cold immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs, frozen vegetables or an ice massage.

Rehabilitation and exercises
Rehabilitation of rotator cuff tears usually focuses on reducing any swelling and/or pain and regaining muscle control and strength. Range-of-motion, stretching and strengthening exercises may be done at home, although a referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer is recommended.

Shoulder Arthroscopy Post-Operative Instructions

Dressing
The large tape dressing on your shoulder may be taken off 48 hours after surgery. The Band-Aid®/Steri-strips covering your wounds should be left in place and may be removed in clinic or allowed to fall off on their own.
Showering
After the tape has been removed, you may shower. Allow the arm to hang down to the side. Carefully wash and dry the armpit by moving your body away from the arm. Do not actively lift the shoulder for this. Do not spend a long time in the shower. Do not submerge the shoulder in a bathtub or hot tub until instructed.

Sling
Your sling should stay on at all times except for when taking care of personal hygiene or performing your exercises. Lean toward your affected side so that your arm gently swings out from your body. This position will allow you to use a washcloth and to apply deodorant. Your sling should stay on while you sleep. At your first follow-up appointment, further instructions for sling usage will be provided.

Pain control
You are given a prescription for a narcotic pain medicine. This may be required to provide adequate pain control. **No pain medicine prescriptions will be called in after business hours (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.).** For the best possible pain control, follow these recommendations:
1. Attempt anti-inflammatory medicine and Tylenol first.
2. Take anti-inflammatory medicine as directed on the bottle. Examples include ibuprofen, Motrin®, Aleve® and Celebrex®.
3. Take Tylenol®/acetaminophen every four to six hours as needed.
4. If Tylenol does not work, try pain medicine as needed and use as directed on the bottle. Most pain medicines have Tylenol in them, therefore, do not take Tylenol while taking pain medicine. The anti-inflammatory medicine may be taken with the pain medicine without adverse effects.

Swelling control
Decreasing post-operative swelling will greatly improve pain control and accelerate rehabilitation. Use the Cryo-Cuff® as often as possible, making sure you add ice every hour to keep the water cold. You may sleep with the Cryo-Cuff on if this is comfortable.

Exercises
During the first week post-operative, daily elbow and wrist range-of-motion exercises should be performed. The sling is removed, the arm is held to the side, and the elbow and wrist can be put through a range of motion. Please take care not to move the shoulder during these exercises. When you are finished, put on the sling.

Notify our office if...

- Symptoms get worse or do not improve in four to six weeks despite treatment.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. The drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Please call **859-323-5533** with questions or for more information.