



## SHOULDER PAIN GUIDE

Shoulder pain is extremely common. In fact, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS), over 13 million patients sought care for shoulder pain in 2005 alone, of which only 34% were related to injury.

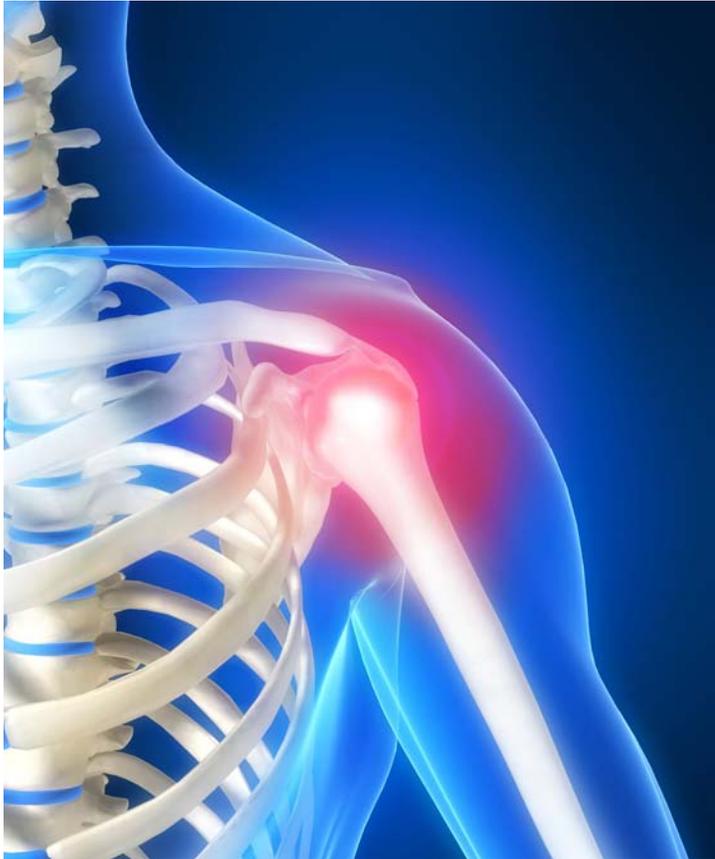
### Common Causes

There are many causes of shoulder pain. Some of the more common causes are sprain/strain, overuse/repetitive trauma, and aging and arthritic changes.

**Rotator Cuff Tendonitis** is a common form of shoulder pain primarily caused by overuse. Age can also contribute to the cause of tendonitis – as you age, your tendons lose elasticity and do not glide as easily as before. This leads to irritation and inflammation in your shoulder. Many times, tendonitis is also diagnosed as or in conjunction with bursitis (inflammation of the bursae, the sacs of synovial fluid that cushion muscles and tendons from bone).

**Frozen shoulder** occurs when there is scarring to the soft tissue (capsule) of the shoulder, resulting in painful, impaired, “frozen” movement. Unfortunately the causes of frozen shoulder are not yet understood and seem to occur for no known reason, but it is generally easily diagnosed by a therapist or doctor. Symptoms typically include a dull aching pain and limited movement resulting in difficulties in daily activities. With proper care, this condition will usually respond favorably to physical therapy treatment.

**Arthritis** literally means “joint inflammation.” The most common form of arthritis in the shoulder, osteoarthritis, is generally a result of the aging process, a past injury, or wear and tear. It is important to diagnosis this type of shoulder pain early so that you are able to determine a baseline to work from in the future.



### General Anatomy

The shoulder is comprised of the rotator cuff (a series of four muscles that rotate the upper arm bone inward and outward), the glenohumeral joint (the main joint of the shoulder), and the acromioclavicular or AC joint (where the collar bone meets the shoulder blade, also known as the clavicle).

**Injury** to the shoulder can take many different forms. Some of the more common forms of shoulder injury are dislocation (when the top of your arm bone disconnects from the shoulder blade, called the scapula), separation (occurs at the AC joint) or a labral tear (which can result from trauma or age). Many forms of shoulder injury are a result of past shoulder instability and weakness.

## Treatment

Minor shoulder pain may be treated in a variety of ways:

**Rest** your shoulder by avoiding or limiting use to allow time for any inflammation to decrease.

**Ice/Heat** should be done to reduce inflammation and help with pain. Ice treatment is generally used for acute (short term) injuries to control swelling. Heat treatment may be used to treat chronic conditions; it is best used prior to taking part in an activity that may aggravate the injured area to help relax and loosen the tissue.

**Gentle Stretching** of the muscles and tendons around the injured area can often help shoulder pain. It is important

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to make sure to stretch the unaffected areas of your shoulders well so that they do not become weak from under use. Stretch only to the point of gentle tightness and stop immediately if you are in pain.

**Lifestyle adjustments** can make a big difference in your shoulder pain as well. Adjusting or eliminating certain activities from your daily routine can make a big difference in how you feel. For example, if your shoulder is sore because you primarily sleep on that one side, try sleeping on your back; you may see a gradual improvement.

Pain that worsens or is due to a more serious condition should be diagnosed and treated by a medical professional.

## The Next Step

Seek help! According to AAOC 90% of patients with shoulder pain will respond to simple treatment methods, such as altering activity, rest, exercise and medication. Physical therapy can help to put you on the path to freedom from pain by helping you increase your strength, regain mobility, and return you to your pre-injury activity level.

You don't have to live with shoulder pain. At **Idaho Physical Therapy**, our caring, professional, experienced therapists can help you achieve the fastest, most complete recovery possible. Call us today to book your free assessment - **(208) 463-0022!**

