



SHOULDER PAIN

COMMON CAUSES OF SHOULDER PAIN
AND HOW TO HEAL, STRENGTHEN AND
PREVENT INJURY WITHOUT SURGERY
OR PAINKILLERS



DR. SUSANNE McINTOSH

HOW TO STOP SHOULDER PAIN...

...Without Surgery
or Painkillers

By DR. SUSANNE McINTOSH

Southwest Florida's specialist
on Physical Therapy
for the Shoulder

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About the Author

Dr. Susanne McIntosh

Shoulder Pain Expert



Dr. Susanne McIntosh is originally from Boiling Springs, PA and has dedicated the better part of her life to helping people heal. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. McIntosh specializes in orthopedic rehabilitation and has used her diversified skill set and passion for healing to serve the health care industry, and its patients, in a number of leadership and healing roles for more than 30 years.

Dr. McIntosh was always fascinated by the complexities of the shoulder joint and has specialized in shoulder rehabilitation for more than 15 years. She is also a certified instructor in Yoga and Pilates, and has taught Ashtanga Yoga all over the world. She reaches those who are not able to come directly to her with her own series of Yoga instruction videos.

Through physical therapy and Yoga, Dr. McIntosh has discovered her passion in life – helping people to heal and rediscover the possibilities within themselves. She tells patients to always have hope, because she has seen the “hopeless” recover and get back to doing what they love.

Active in her church, Dr. McIntosh enjoys singing in the church choir and sharing the love of God and prayer. Through her faith, she has been able to combine her love for travel with her passion for helping people by participating in missionary and global health outreach programs. When she is not busy helping people, Dr. McIntosh enjoys gardening, nature, running, sports and living a simple life.

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It is impossible to give a 100% complete accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination. Likewise, the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed fully accurate in the absence of this examination from one of the Physical Therapy Specialists.

Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury. Dr. McIntosh and Allied Physical Therapy shall not be held liable for injury or death occurring from following any of the advice in this eBook.

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Introduction

Does shoulder pain limit your ability to do and participate in activities you love? Are you awakened several times each night by pain in your shoulder, neck and arms? Do you often need ice to soothe the pain and ache that is left behind in your shoulder muscles after athletic activities? Have you had to change the way you dress yourself or take a shower or get a shirt over your head because you can no longer move your arm in the direction needed to complete these activities the way you used to?

If you answered “yes,” to any of these questions, you will want to keep reading, because help is available – and that help is probably less invasive, more affordable and more effective than you think.

There are so many ways that shoulder injuries can impede our ability to live our lives to the fullest – whether these injuries are the result of sudden trauma or the result of decades of use and overuse. Consider the grandfather that can no longer reach down to pick up his grandchild from the floor. Or the young woman who can no longer enjoy a round of golf with her friends. Or the teenage athlete who misses the big tournament due to chronic injury.

The mechanics of the shoulder joint are very complicated because the shoulders are the most moveable joints in the human body. There are a large number of tendons, bones, cartilage and shock-absorbing tissues connected to one another and passing through a very narrow space that all contribute collectively to the many varied movements of the arm – reaching forward, reaching back, reaching over, reaching across, and even supporting the weight of your body very time you eject yourself from a chair. This constant stress on the joint makes it especially prone to injury.

I understand the pain you are feeling – whether that pain is constant or it comes and goes – and I understand the conditions, movements, overuses and breakdowns in the shoulder system that can lead to different types of shoulder pain. More importantly, I know that nine times out of ten, these pains can be relieved or eliminated all together – without drugs and without invasive surgery.



Experts estimate that as many as 25 percent of people over the age of 50 are living with some kind of shoulder pain.

Most people who experience shoulder pain will usually head straight to their physician or emergency treatment center, leading to treatment that is often expensive, confusing and ineffective. If drugs, expensive imaging tests, and surgery don't sound like your idea of fun – you should know that other – often more effective – treatment options are available. And you don't need to see a physician for a referral.

Although there will be times when traditional medical treatment methods will be necessary, you should know that such times are actually rare. However, sudden debilitating shoulder pain without evidence of trauma or injury may be cause for alarm and help should be sought as soon as possible at an urgent care or hospital emergency facility.

In most other cases of gradual onset of painful symptoms, or pain caused by known injury or trauma, physical therapists specialty trained in the treatment of shoulder pain can help minimize discomfort with conservative, non-invasive, effective treatments focused on lifestyle changes.

In most cases, a physical therapist specialist, trained in the treatment of shoulder pain, can help you obtain relief without the use of drugs or invasive surgeries. In this book, I will let you in on a few strategies that you can try at home to relieve or eliminate your suffering and get started on the path to wellness – so you can get back to doing what you love.

Of course, these strategies address the three most common causes of shoulder pain that we see in the clinic each day – and may or may not apply to you and your current condition. Even when the root cause of pain is known, there is no guarantee that any one therapeutic strategy is going to work. Therefore, if you are still experiencing pain after a few weeks, we urge you to make an appointment so that we can personally assess you and your situation.

Although physical therapy may not offer the quick fix so many people are seeking – a commitment to getting better and following your program can lead to a lifetime of pain-free wellness. You only have one body – and you owe it to yourself to keep it in optimum working order!

Disclaimers¹ aside, these tips, when followed as prescribed, are very often successful in relieving the most common shoulder pain. Just imagine.... you may no longer need to take painkillers to get through the work day, or to get a good night's rest. Imagine getting your life back – without the shoulder pain that always seems to dampen even the most exciting life events – without drugs and without expensive and invasive surgeries.

1. See full disclaimer on page v

THREE MOST COMMON SHOULDER INJURIES

1 Shoulder Tendonitis

Are you overusing your shoulder joint? Do you have a job where you must reach overhead every day? Maybe you pitch for the Tampa Bay Rays, or swim or play tennis? We have also been seeing an increase in patients complaining of shoulder pain due to head-down smart phone usage, where unsupported arms hold the device in such a way as to cause the shoulders to round in, increase stress on the shoulder joints.



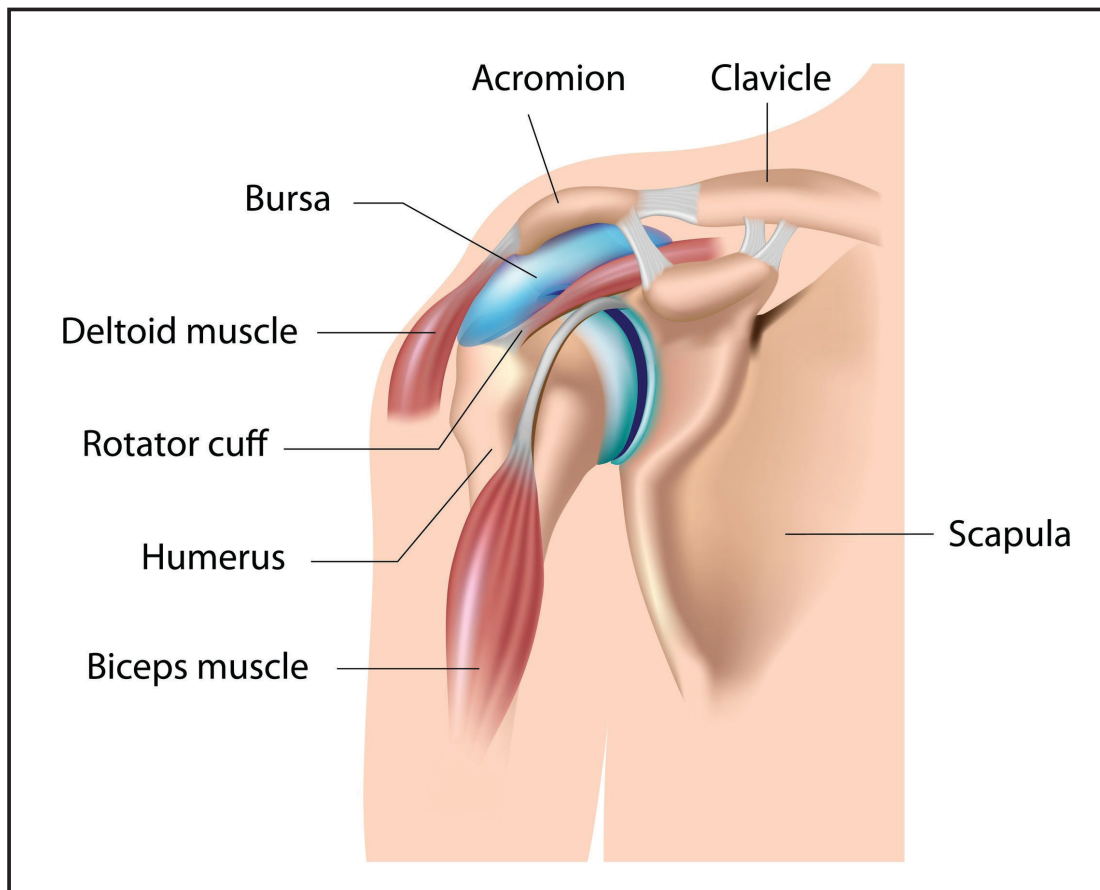
This type of constant stress on the tendons that hold your arm and shoulder joints in place can lead to inflammation of the tissues, causing a pain at the top of your shoulder, which can radiate down the arm when the arm is lifted overhead or twisted.

Of course, it is not only overuse, but also underuse that can cause problems in the shoulder joint. If your muscles are not accustomed to activity – especially activity that puts a heavy strain on underused, weak muscles – injuries can happen because force is transferred to the tendons and shock-absorbing tissues (bursa) in the shoulder joint, causing inflammation and pain.

Holding your phone in one hand while looking down at it constantly puts pressure on the muscles of the neck and shoulder joint.

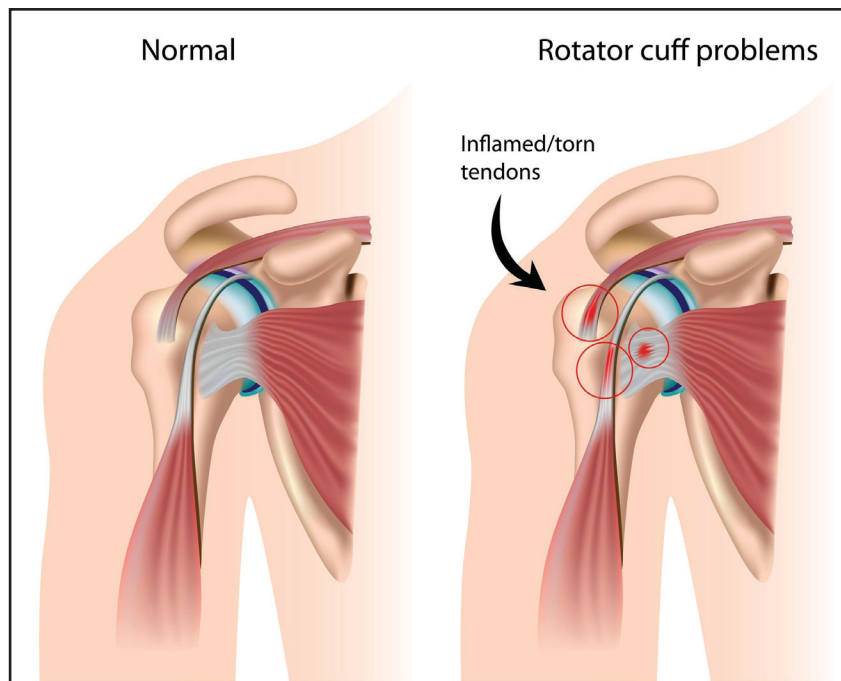
Although symptoms of tendonitis and bursitis (an inflammation of the bursa) usually last for only a few days with rest, they can return quickly or become chronic if not addressed.

Many people who suffer with chronic shoulder pain mistakenly believe that there is no escape from the pain caused by overuse – especially in the case of career house painters, or construction workers, or professional athletes. However, there are corrections to technique that can lessen the impact of repetitive movements on the delicate system of tendons, muscles and tissues of the shoulder joint. Likewise, gradual strengthening exercise is the best bet to building up weak muscles before jumping right in to a new exercise or weight training program.



The shoulder joint is one of the most complicated joints in the human body. It is also one of the most injured.

2 Rotator Cuff Injuries



The rotator cuff is not just one tendon, but a system of muscles and tendons connected to the bones of the shoulder, working together to allow the many varied movements of the arms. The rotator cuff also acts a stabilizer for the joint, keeping the rather large head of the arm bone firmly attached to its rather shallow shoulder socket. An injury to this rotator cuff system is the most common cause of shoulder pain, affecting more than 3 million Americans each year.

Small tears in the rotator cuff are the most common type of rotator cuff injury, usually caused by repetitive overhead movements of the shoulder over a period of months, years, or even decades. Those commonly afflicted include painters, plasterers, and other construction workers, as well as athletes who play tennis and baseball and those who participate in archery. The risk of rotator cuff injury increases with age, with most of those afflicted over the age of 40.

Small tears in the rotator cuff can cause dull, aching pain deep in the shoulder and can make sleeping on the affected side difficult or painful. Reaching behind your back can also be difficult – and the arm may feel weak.

Of course, the best way to avoid rotator cuff injuries is to avoid repetitive activities that put you at greater risk of injury. However, we know that is not always possible – especially when that activity is your job. But, there are things you can try to reduce the risk of injury and lessen the pain associated with rotator cuff degradation.



Those most at risk of rotator cuff injuries include painters, plasterers, and other construction workers, as well as athletes who play tennis and baseball and those who participate in archery

3 Frozen Shoulder

Adhesive capsulitis, or frozen shoulder, happens when the connective tissue enclosing the joint (the capsule) becomes thickened and tight – restricting movement of the shoulder and causing pain. In many cases, the cause of frozen shoulder is unknown, as pain and loss of range of motion can come on very gradually. In other cases, the condition can be brought on by a trauma or injury to the capsule tissue, leading to the formation of protective scar tissue.

In either case, frozen shoulder restricts regular movement of the shoulder – although the pain can actually diminish over time as range of motion becomes more and more narrowed. People afflicted with frozen shoulder may find it difficult to complete everyday tasks such as getting dressed, brushing their hair, wiping counters or reaching into a clothes dryer.

Some people are at an increased risk for developing frozen shoulder due to a condition or circumstance that prevents their moving the shoulder normally – such as with patients who have recently undergone breast surgery or who have had a stroke. Both women and men over the age of 40 are more likely to develop frozen shoulder – and more women than men are affected by the condition.

The good news is that frozen shoulder is highly treatable with physical therapy, range of motion exercises, and deep tissue massage to break up and loosen tense and thickened tissues that restrict movement.



Frozen Shoulder commonly affects people over the age of 40 – with more women than men afflicted with the condition. A qualified physical therapist can help break up and loosen the tense and thickened tissues that restrict movement for those suffering with frozen shoulder.

THINGS TO TRY...

... How to Find Relief from Shoulder Pain WITHOUT Surgery or Painkillers

If you believe that you are suffering from tendonitis, bursitis, rotator cuff injury or frozen shoulder, there are a number of things that you can try to relieve immediate pain and prevent further injury. Of course, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – so be sure to read the section titled “Prevention,” for tips on how to prevent shoulder injuries in the first place!

Post-Injury

1 Rest

The best thing to do when an activity causes pain in your shoulder is to stop the activity as soon as possible and rest for a few days. This means stopping participation in any activity that will put pressure on the shoulder until it has had ample time to heal – preventing further injury to an already-compromised shoulder joint.



2 Ice

One of the best things to do to treat the pain and inflammation of a recently injured shoulder joint is to apply ice as soon as it is possible. Ice reduces inflammation, thereby reducing pain. Using a towel as a buffer between the ice and the skin, apply ice to the affected area at least twice daily, for up to 20 minutes. You should also apply ice after any activity that tends to place stress on your shoulder.



Apply ice to an injured shoulder as soon as it is possible.

3 Heat

After ice, heat is the next step in recovery for injured tissues. Using a hot water bottle, a commercially available heat wrap, or a heating pad (always being careful to avoid burning the skin), apply heat to loosen tense muscles, tendons and tissues.

4 Anti-Inflammatory Medications

Doctors will often prescribe over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, to further help reduce inflammation and reduce pain. Please be sure that you do not exceed the dosage recommended on the label or by your doctor – and that you are careful not to take anti-inflammatory drugs that may interact with other drugs you are taking or medical conditions that may be present.

5 Keep Moving

Although it is best to rest an injured shoulder joint after an injury, it is also equally as important to keep moving the injured joint to whatever extent it is possible without causing more pain, and within your range of motion.



*Although rest is important after an injury –
it is just as important to keep moving.*

Stretching and Strengthening

1 Pendulum Exercise

Bending over from the waist, allow the arm to dangle freely. Then, using movement of your body, initiate swinging and circular movements of the arm. Do this exercise for several minutes at a time, several times a day, to loosen tight muscles – especially before beginning stretching exercises.



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2 Overhead Arm Elevation

Lie on your back and grip a stick or cane with both hands, about 18 inches apart. Slowly raise the stick backwards and overhead, keeping your elbows straight, and allowing the “good” shoulder to do as much of the work as is necessary in order to avoid pain in the injured shoulder. Hold for a count of ten, then slowly return the stick back toward your body. Repeat 10 times.



3 Cross-Chest Stretch

Again, lying on your back, hold the elbow of the injured shoulder with the opposite hand, keeping your arm straight. Stretch the shoulder toward the opposite shoulder gently. Hold for 30 seconds, then release. Repeat three to five times.



*Photos on this page provided
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4 Hands Behind Head Stretch

Again, lying on your back, place your hands behind your head, with your elbows pointed up toward the ceiling and as close together as possible without pain. Slowly, keeping your hands tucked behind your head, move your elbows down toward the floor, stretching the shoulder muscles. Hold for a count of ten, then slowly return your arms to their starting position. Do ten repetitions, twice a day.



*Photos on this page provided
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5 Upper Back Stretch

Standing or sitting upright, squeeze your shoulder blades together by stretching your shoulders backwards, toward each other. Imagine you are trying to squeeze water out of an imaginary sponge placed between your shoulder blades. Hold for 20 seconds and release. Repeat three times, twice a day.



Prevention

1 Sit With Arm Supports

When seated working at a desk, it is best to sit upright in a good quality chair, with your arms supported at 90° angles, your computer monitor placed at eye level, and your feet firmly on the floor.



2 Avoid Smart Phone Overuse

Try to limit your time looking and typing on your smart phone or tablet computer. If you must use your smart phone or tablet computer for extended periods of time, try to keep it at eye level, and use support under your arms to decrease stress on the shoulder joint.



3 Grip the Steering Wheel at 5 and 7

When driving on the highway for extensive periods of time, it is best to forget everything you learned in driver's education class about keeping your hands on the wheel at 10 and 2. This grip, when you are not actively trying to navigate busy traffic situations, puts undue pressure on the shoulder joints, leading to inflammation and pain. When cruising, it is best to keep your arms close to your body to avoid that stress on the joint whenever possible, gripping the steering wheel at approximately 5 and 7.



When cruising on a highway for long periods of time, an overhanded, "10 and 2" grip on the steering wheel stresses the shoulder joint and can make driving for long periods of time painful. An underhanded "5 and 7" grip keeps the arms close to the body, thereby decreasing stress on the shoulder joint.

3 See a Physical Therapist Specialist

There really is no better way to help alleviate your shoulder pain. When seeing a qualified physical therapist specializing in treatment of the shoulder, they will be able to detect the root and source of your annoying and debilitating pain and plan your treatment accordingly, helping you to get better faster. In return, you will be able to carry on with your life, avoid taking pain pills, live without fear, and get back to exercising and working.

Conclusion

Shoulder pain can be an expensive and frustrating experience for all patients. Using the strategies listed in this book, you may experience some relief, or you may eliminate your shoulder pain once and for all. These are just a few of the most common approaches to shoulder pain treatments, among a plethora of effective therapies. If you apply these strategies daily, you may very well see a decrease – or even disappearance – of the shoulder pain that has been keeping you from enjoying your life, and ultimately get you back to doing what you love to do.

I hope this is just the beginning of a relationship between you and me and the rest of the Allied physical therapy team. As your local area specialist, I hope to become your trusted guide in managing and overcoming your aches and pains.

Dedicated to Your Health,

Dr. Susanne McIntosh

Dr. Susanne McIntosh,
Shoulder Pain Specialist Physical Therapist

HOW TO STOP SHOULDER PAIN... ...Without Surgery or Painkillers

Real Patients, Real Results



“Susanne has been a blessing to me. I sought out her help with an issue concerning my back. She is so thorough that in assessing my situation she found that I really needed therapy on my shoulder. I had suffered with pain since heart surgery and subsequent pace maker surgery. I had been dealing with this pain for 5 years. Susanne resolved the situation and showed me how to exercise to keep the pain from returning. Thanks to Susanne I am healed and happy!”

~ Nancy S.



“I moved to Cape Coral from NJ after having shoulder surgery and was in search of a physical therapy facility to continue my PT. Surfing the internet, I found Allied. I called to make an appointment, impressed by the professionalism of the receptionist. Then on my first visit, I was blessed by working with Susanne, who has been such an inspiration to me. Susanne has helped relieve my pain, both physically and emotionally, and continues to go the extra mile working with me to find a solution to my problem. I feel all the staff is compassionate with helping their patients, and the whole staff works hand-in-hand to make their patients feel comfortable. I am so happy I found Allied and I have Susanne to thank for helping me recover. She is an asset to the facility”

~ Mary L.