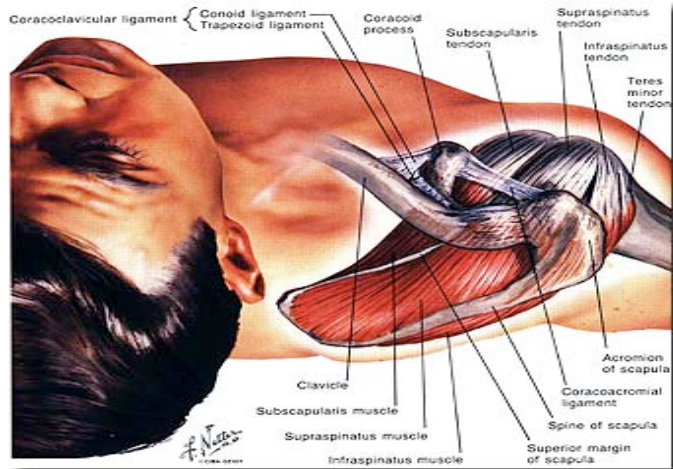


Rotator Cuff Tear

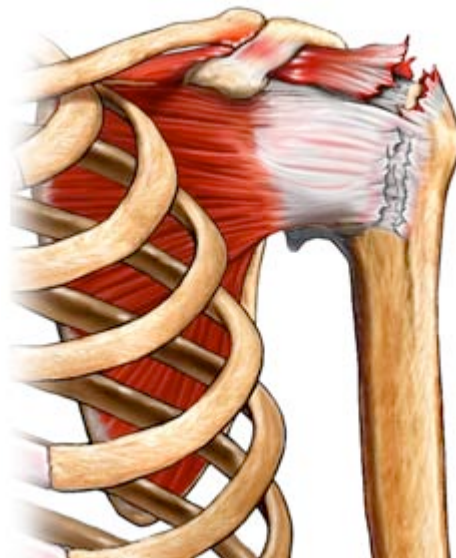
What is the Rotator Cuff?

There are four muscles that comprise the rotator cuff which are the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor and subscapularis. These muscles originate in back of the shoulder on the shoulder blade, wrap around the head of the humerus and attach on the front of the shoulder. The function of the rotator cuff muscles is to stabilize the shoulder joint and provide rotation and correct biomechanics about the shoulder. Rotator cuff tears most commonly occur at the supraspinatus.



How is the Rotator cuff injured?

A rotator cuff tear can occur due to a traumatic event or as a result of overuse over an extended period of time. These tears are most common in people over the age of forty. Younger individuals who sustain this injury typically are caused by acute trauma or repetitive overhead activity such as a baseball pitcher. There are different classifications for tears. There are partial thickness tears, which only go through part of the muscle or tendinous junction. Then there are full thickness tears that go completely through the muscular tendinous junction. The severity or classification of tear will determine the treatment and outcome for the patient.



What are the symptoms?

Pain symptoms associated with a rotator cuff tear usually occur when there are stresses placed across the muscle. These stresses can result from either stretching or contracting the area interacting with the tear. Common symptoms with a rotator cuff tear include difficulty lifting objects, loss of range of motion due to pain, weakness and pain with lifting and lowering the arm. The pain can progress to where it is constant even at rest. Pain symptoms may present themselves on the lateral (outside) aspect of the arm.

Treatment Options

Treatment options should start by contacting an orthopedic specialist. Depending on the severity of symptoms and mitigating factors, the physician may decide to proceed with imaging such as x-rays and MRI. However, the physician may decide that an appropriate route is conservative care and physical therapy. Physical therapy treatment may use different approaches and techniques to decrease inflammation, such as modalities, soft tissue, and joint mobilizations. In addition, the therapist will evaluate your activities and biomechanics to assist in mitigation of stress to the torn area. Finally the therapist will attempt to re-educate the compromised muscle with prescribed therapeutic activity. If conservative treatment is unsuccessful or the nature of the tear is of a complex nature, your orthopedic specialist may repair the muscle with surgical intervention.

If you would like more information about this issue, or need a physician referral in your area, please call us at 310-860-9720.