



Hands of Health Newsletter

January/February 2011

Hello, again:

Welcome to the new year. This is a good time to wipe the slate clean and start fresh. With the holidays over, done and behind us it's time to get back into our healthy routines. And if you haven't been on a healthy routine, maybe you need to ask yourself why; or why not? Whatever the case may be I once again, and everyone is well aware I've emphasized this numerous times, must take care of your health, your body. And when you take care of your physical health it has a rippling effect on your mental, emotional, and spiritual health, whatever spiritual health is for you. I'm NOT advocating any particular set of beliefs, We've had some ideal weather leading up to winter to get outside and enjoy Arizona. BUT if it's not so pleasant outside, then exercise inside; no excuses! Personally, I do workout inside with a rebounder, free weights and a weight bench. I do tons of crunches on the floor. So I get my cardio and my strength training. Be sure and do a warm up and cool down. Your post exercise routine is as critical to the effectiveness of your workout as the workout itself. I understand you're busy, busy, busy with work and your family but it's not going to do you any good if you're laid up in bed. And equally important, you MUST get in regularly, like your exercise, and get your massages. In addition don't put poisons in your body: no processed, refined, or manufactured foods or substances. Thank you Dr. Weil.

Years ago I took a class on working with rotator cuff injuries. From my experience I've found most people don't really know what the rotator cuff is. When a client complains about their rotator cuff they usually grab their shoulder. But that's NOT where the rotator cuff is. The rotator cuff is a set of 4 muscles, nicknamed the "SITS" muscles that encapsulate the scapula or shoulder blade, The names of these muscles are: supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor, and subscapularis. The supraspinatus is the top muscle - a smaller muscle - on the top of the scapula that sits above a ridge called the spine of scapula. Below the spine of scapula on the flat of the scapula is the infraspinatus. To the outside or the lateral position close the armpit or axilla on the edge of the scapula is the teres minor and in the front of the scapula is the subscapularis. It's not visible like the other three; not without an x-ray. I'm going to give you an idea of what happens when you have a rotator cuff injury below. First some definitions so you will understand what I'm talking about. 1) Humerus: the arm, the part that attaches to your shoulder; the lower part is your forearm 2) Acromion process: where the clavicle connects with the scapula 3) Clavicle: your collarbone 4) Coracoid process: an attachment point on your scapula 5) Medial: towards the middle or towards the spine 6) Lateral: away from the middle or the spine towards the side of your body 7) Glenohumeral: where the humerus attaches with the scapula. Go and learn something.

ROTATOR CUFF PATHOLOGY

INFLAMMATORY CONDITIONS - The tendons or bursa of the rotator cuff become inflamed from excessive repetitive stress placed upon them. They are often pinched between the head of the humerus, and most commonly, the acromion process as well as the coracoid process of the scapula. This is called **impingement syndroms**.

Common contributing causes to this problem are postural distortions found frequently in our society. Repetitive movement leads to patterns of shortened and lengthened muscles, which result in faulty movement patterns.

The tendon of the supraspinatus muscle also has a dime sized area within the tendon that is ischemic (poor blood supply). This area is vulnerable to inflammation and tears.

In the shoulder, frequently shortness of the shoulder joint medial rotators, especially subscapularis, pectoralis major and latissimus dorsi will limit external rotation and lead to shoulder impingement.

Restrictions of muscles that will prevent proper glenohumeral rhythm (synergistic movement of scapula and humerus) including pectoralis minor, levator scapula, serratus anterior and upper trapezius should also be considered.

It is important to remember that these muscle imbalances occur as part of a larger pattern of movement which also needs to be addressed.

ACUTE CONDITIONS - Injuries to the rotator cuff can also occur during activities, especially throwing activities, or ball sports (e.g. baseball, basketball or tennis). Acute injuries need to be medically managed and the client referred to the proper health care provider.

Massage therapy can be of benefit in prevention of injuries in "at risk" populations, helping to maintain good levels of muscle and tendon flexibility and muscle balance.

STAGES OF ROTATOR CUFF INJURY

Stage 1

- Tendonitis: the tendons of the rotator cuff can become damaged by repetitive stresses or impingement. In an attempt to heal the damage the body initiates inflammation in the affected structures.

Stage 2

- Bursitis: the fluid sac (bursa) located between the acromion and supraspinatus tendon, or the coracoid process and subscapularis tendon become irritated and inflamed.
- Inflammation with scarring: the tendon becomes inflamed, scar tissue builds up around the area. This further reduces the amount of space for the tendon to pass between the head of humerus and the scapula.

Stage 3

- Rotator Cuff Tear: left untreated the tendon may become so damaged and weakened, that it may rupture for a seemingly trivial movement (e.g. reaching for the soap in the shower!) This most commonly occurs in adults over the age of 50.

SYMPTOMS OF ROTATOR CUFF INJURY

- Aching pain over the deltoid insertion (common site of referral from the rotator cuff).
- Painful arc syndrome, where the client has pain through abduction, usually from 60 to 100 degrees of shoulder abduction as the inflamed tendon passes under the acromion.
- Pain with overhead activities, or inability to lift the upper extremity overhead.
- Shoulder weakness
- Clicking, popping or catching in the shoulder associated with pain.

Now that you know what the rotator cuff is all about you can clear up any misunderstanding anyone else you know may have the next time they tell you about their rotator cuff problems and they point to the wrong muscles. Be sure and send them in to see me and of course yourself as well. It's not going to go away by itself even if you don't feel pain anymore. Just because you aren't in pain doesn't mean there isn't anything wrong. Pain is the last indicator of a problem. The idea is to prevent the pain cycle from occurring in the first place. That's why I emphasize preventive maintenance. Also, remember that Valentine's Day will be here in a flash and a couple's massage, couple's massage class, or a gift certificate for a massage is a great way to show your love for that someone special in your life. It's a great gift for many other occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, awards, and appreciation to show someone you are thinking about them and that you care about them. Back around Spring time.

Until next time,

Stay healthy, stay well,



If you are not your own doctor, you are a fool. - Hippocrates

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