

ROTATOR CUFF CONDITIONS

What is a “Rotator Cuff”?



“Rotator Cuff” refers to the group of muscles attaching the upper arm bone (humerus) to the shoulder blade (scapula). These muscles are important in shoulder movements and stability. The tendon, or piece that attaches the muscle to the bone, can become irritated, damaged, or completely torn.

Types of injuries:

- Tendinitis/ Tendinosis: this refers to irritation or inflammation of the rotator cuff tendons.
- Partial thickness tear: this refers to tendon damage that does not create a full hole in the tendon.
- Full thickness tear: this refers to tendon damage that goes through the entire thickness of the tendon.

What causes rotator cuff damage?

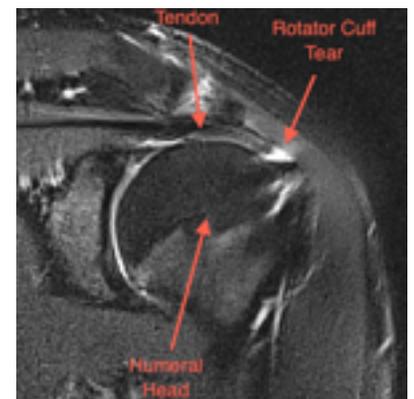
- A fall or traumatic impact
- Repetitive lifting or shoulder movements
- Sports injuries (eg. throwing a baseball, spiking a volleyball)
- Degeneration over time

What are the symptoms of rotator cuff injuries?

- Shoulder pain that is worse when reaching overhead or behind your back
- Weakness or difficulty lifting objects
- Limited range of motion
- Night pain and difficulty sleeping on the injured shoulder

What investigations do I need to have done?

Typically, we start with an x-ray to make sure there are no fractures and to examine your joint for signs of arthritis or bony abnormalities/ bone spurs. An ultrasound may initially be performed to identify the type of damage. An MRI is typically ordered to further examine the tear and the extent of the damage.



What are my treatment options:

MRI showing rotator cuff tear

- Tendinosis/ partial thickness tear: For these conditions, surgery is usually NOT required. Physiotherapy is often helpful. PRP (platelet-rich plasma) can also be injected to promote tendon healing.
- Full thickness tear: This type of tear, especially if it is a result of a fall or injury, often requires surgery. Shoulder arthroscopy is performed to attach the torn tendon back to the bone. Large tears may need a second procedure using a graft. Physiotherapy is required after surgery to restore the range of motion and strength of the shoulder.