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## **The Shoulder**

Your shoulder is the most flexible joint in your body. It allows you to place and rotate your arm in many positions in front, above, to the side and behind your body. This flexibility also makes your shoulder susceptible to instability and injury. Early diagnosis and treatment of shoulder problems can make a significant difference in the long run. Delaying surgical repair (if required) can increase the likelihood that the problem will be more difficult to treat at a later date.

The shoulder is a ball-and-socket joint. It is made up of three bones: the upper arm bone (humerus), shoulder blade (scapula), and collarbone (clavicle). The head of the arm bone fits into the small socket (glenoid) of the shoulder blade to form the shoulder joint (glenohumeral joint). The socket for the glenoid is surrounded by a soft-tissue rim (labrum). A smooth, durable surface (articular cartilage) on the head of the arm bone, and a thin inner lining (synovium) of the joint allows the smooth motion of the shoulder joint.

The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that attach your upper arm to your shoulder blade. The muscles attached to the rotator cuff enable you to lift your arm, reach overhead, and take part in activities such as throwing or swimming. Four muscles anchored to the shoulder blade wrap around the shoulder, where their tendons (cords of tissue that join muscle to bone) blend together to form a “cuff”, or band of tissue. The rotator cuff tendons attach at the top of the arm bone, just below the acromion.

A sac-like membrane (bursa) between the rotator cuff and the shoulder blade, cushions and helps lubricate the motion between these two structures.

## **Bursitis or tendinitis**

Bursitis or tendinitis can occur with overuse from repetitive activities. These activities cause rubbing or squeezing (impingement) of the rotator cuff under the acromion.

## **Impingement and partial rotator cuff tears**

Partial thickness rotator cuff tears can be associated with chronic inflammation and the development of spurs on the underside of the acromion or the AC joint. Surgery is often needed to remove the spurs on the underside of the acromion and to repair the rotator cuff. This type of surgery often can be accomplished using arthroscopy.

Arthroscopy allows the doctor to diagnose and treat certain shoulder problems without making a large incision. Using a special surgical instrument equipped with a camera, pictures of the inside of your joint are displayed on a video monitor to guide the surgeon as repairs are made. This is done as an outpatient surgery, so you can return home the same day.

Full tears of the rotator cuff are often treated with an open surgery. Tendons may need to be attached to bone. This surgery is most often done as outpatient surgery. The doctor may decide to send you home with a PAC Unit to help make you more comfortable for the first three days. This is a pump connected with an IV that delivers a specific dosage of a pain medication at intervals. Your arm will be in a sling or an abduction brace to hold your arm away from your body. The sling or brace will stay on for 6 to 8 weeks. After a period of healing, there will be an extensive period of rehabilitation to restore the function of the shoulder.