Shoulder

Shoulder injuries can happen at any age. They can be a result of a traumatic injury such as a fall or motor vehicle accident, or from general wear and tear. Whatever the cause of shoulder problems, the best cure is an accurate diagnosis from a physician specializing in the shoulder followed with appropriate care.

The shoulder is the most mobile joint in the body. The way the joints, muscles and tendons come together allow unconstrained mobility. There are three joints that make up the shoulder: the glenohumeral joint, commonly referred to as the ball and socket joint, the acromioclavicular joint, or A/C joint, and the scapulothoracic joint.

There are several muscles around these joints that provide support and stability. The deltoid is the muscle that can be felt when you touch the tip of your shoulder. This muscle's primary responsibility is to assist in raising the arm. Under the deltoid muscle, are the four muscles that make up what is called the rotator cuff. These four muscles are very small but provide the stabilization necessary to keep the glenohumeral joint intact. If the glenohumeral joint were to dislocate, the tendons, ligaments, cartilage around the rotator cuff, or even the bone of the humeral head can be damaged.

Many problems of the shoulder are caused by wear and tear on the joint over years of use. People age forty and over may be familiar with the aches and pains commonly called "arthritis." In fact, the shoulder is prone to arthritis but this pain can also be impingement, which is when the underside of the acromion rubs the surface of the rotator cuff when the arm is lifted. Pain can also be caused by bursitis, inflammation of the bursa sac lying around the rotator cuff, or tendonitis, an inflammation of the cuff itself.

Many of these shoulder problems can be initially treated with anti-inflammatory medication and a specific physical therapy program designed by shoulder specialists. Occasionally, surgery is required to correct the problem. We believe the outcome of both is improved when an orthopaedic surgeon specializing in the shoulder is managing the process.