

# ROTATOR CUFF INJURIES

**The rotator cuff is a group of tendons and muscles in the shoulder. It connects the upper arm (humerus) to the shoulder blade (scapula.) The rotator cuff allows the shoulder to rotate and provides stability to the joint.**

## **THE MUSCLES OF THE ROTATOR CUFF:**

- Supraspinatus: abducts arm and stabilizes
- Infraspinatus: Externally rotates arm and stabilizes
- Teres minor: externally rotates arm and stabilizes
- Subscapularis: Internally rotates arm and stabilizes

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A ROTATOR CUFF INJURY**

- Pain and tenderness
- Difficulty reaching overhead, reaching behind the back, lifting, or pulling
- Shoulder weakness
- Difficulty sleeping

- Loss of shoulder range of motion
- Tendency to keep the shoulder inactive

Are you experiencing any of these symptoms? Consider seeing your primary care physician if you are experiencing two or more of these signs and symptoms or if you are concerned about your risk of sustaining a rotator cuff injury.

## **WHAT CAUSES ROTATOR CUFF INJURIES?**

A rotator cuff injury includes any type of irritation or damage to your rotator cuff muscles or tendons. Below are common causes of rotator cuff injuries.

- Age: Rotator cuff tears are most common in people older than 40.
- Poor Posture: A forward shoulder posture can



cause a muscle or tendon to become irritated and inflamed when you throw, perform overhead activities, or spend long periods of time sitting at a desk.

- Falling: Using your arm to break a fall, or falling on the arm, can bruise or tear a rotator cuff tendon or muscle.
- Lifting or pulling: An injury is more likely to occur if you are lifting an object that is too heavy. Overhead or pulling motion put your rotator cuff muscles in a position where an injury could occur.
- Repetitive stress: Repetitive overhead movements can cause inflammation and

eventual tearing of your rotator cuff. This is common in athletes and among the building trades, such as painters and carpenters.

### DAILY CHECK IN:

- When do you feel your posture is the best?
- In a typical day, do you have trouble breathing?
- Have you noticed any acid reflux or digestion issues?
- Do you notice any tightness in your chest, neck, or midback?
- How does it feel to reach overhead? Behind your back?

## PROACTIVE MOVEMENTS

Tea Cup Exercise: This is a tai chi based exercise that is designed to challenge the soft tissue surrounding the shoulder and move the arm to allow for motor control development as it takes the upper body through many end ranges as a low impact yet effective drill for improving posture.

- Start with the palm facing up in front of the torso.
- Move the elbow out to the side with the fingers pointing at the hips.
- Rotate the forearm so the fingers are pointing away from the body while keeping the palm facing up.
- Move the arm in front of the body and raise the hand to above the opposite shoulder.
- Rotate the hand so that the fingers point behind the head and return to starting position
- Reverse direction
- Repeat on other hand

