

Rotator Cuff Tears

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What is a Rotator Cuff Tear?

The rotator cuff is a group of tendons the attach to the top of the upper arm bone (the humerus) and help elevate and rotate the upper extremity. These tendons also contribute to the stability of the shoulder.

A tear in one or more of these tendons results in pain, weakness and restricted movement of the arm. Rotator cuff tears may result from an injury such as a fall or may occur gradually from repeated overhead activities or repetitive injuries.

Patients with rotator cuff tears often have pain at top and side of their shoulder. Pain often increases with attempted overhead activities. Rotator cuff tears are associated with weakness of the shoulder.

How are Rotator Cuff Tears Diagnosed?

The presence of a rotator cuff tear can be suspected during a physical examination. Weakness and pain with certain motions often suggest that the rotator cuff may be torn. Rotator cuff tears vary in size. The diagnosis is generally confirmed by performing an MRI.



MRI of torn rotator cuff

Rotator cuff tears lack adequate blood supply to heal without treatment.

How are Rotator Cuff Tears Treated?

The rotator cuff tendon is under constant tension and lacks the adequate blood supply to heal spontaneously. Nonsurgical treatment is focused on minimizing symptoms and may include the use of anti-inflammatory medications, exercises, physical therapy and injections. However, even small tears treated non-surgically will not heal and may increase in size over time.

Surgical treatment is considered for rotator cuff tears when nonsurgical treatment fails to alleviate symptoms of pain and weakness.

The procedure is usually performed as an outpatient procedure and does NOT require an overnight stay in the hospital.

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