

ASK YOUR PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Why Does My Shoulder Hurt When I Try To Use My Arm?

If this is you, you are not alone... There are many others who experience shoulder pain as they attempt to use their arm for everyday tasks. Many of these same folks also have pain in the shoulder that wakes them at night as well. Many people notice a sharp or “pinching” pain at the top of the shoulder and or on the outside of the arm halfway between elbow and the shoulder.

So where does this pain come from?

Well, as you may have suspected, shoulder pain can come from many different causes. Often times people develop shoulder pain over time without any one specific incident that they can identify as the cause. Shoulder pain of this nature is usually due to faulty shoulder mechanics, which means that the muscles, bones, ligaments, etc. are not working together properly during use of the arm.

The shoulder gets some of its stability from ligaments (strong connective tissue that connects one bone to another) and some from joint capsule tissue, which helps to hold the ball of the shoulder into the socket (which is located on the end of the shoulder blade.) However, the overwhelming majority of shoulder control, stability, coordination and power come from the rotator cuff and shoulder blade muscles. The rotator cuff is made up of 4 different muscles that attach from the front and back of the shoulder blade to the top, front and back of the “ball” of the shoulder. These 4 muscles are VERY important to

pain free function of your shoulder. Their job is to pull the ball (head) of the shoulder down and in as the arm raises over the head, out to the side or in combined movements. When this happens and the scapular muscles are working correctly together with the rotator cuff muscles then you are unlikely to have shoulder pain with arm use. However, if the rotator cuff muscles become weak, injured or imbalanced compared to other larger muscles surrounding the shoulder, then the rotator cuff muscles cannot do their job effectively. This leads to pinching of the rotator cuff (since the muscles are not pulling the head down and in) between the ball of the shoulder and the bone above it that comes off your shoulder blade.

There are quite a few other reasons for shoulder pain as well, however rotator cuff impingement is the most common.

So what do I do to get rid of the pain and return to using my arm/shoulder as desired?

In this case, the rotator cuff and scapular muscles need to be strengthened to restore the normal mechanics of shoulder, which will abolish the pain.

Physical Therapists at Cardin and Miller Physical Therapy are expert clinicians in the treatment of the shoulder. We have experienced excellent success in the treatment of shoulder pain by utilizing the above treatment process. Our Physical Therapists work to resolve the irritation and inflammation, restore range of motion and strength, and restore normal shoulder joint mechanics.

Cardin and Miller Physical Therapy provides Direct Access care which means that with most insurances, you can call our office today (Carlisle 717-245-0400 Mechanicsburg 717-697-6600 / Harrisburg 717-695-6436) and schedule an evaluation with one of our foot and ankle experts WITHOUT seeing your doctor first (we will communicate our findings and treatment plan with your doctor) this will save you time and money.

Also, you may call any of our offices and schedule a **FREE** screen if you would like to discuss your situation and find out more information before committing to treatment.

Steve Miller PT, C.Ped is the owner of Cardin and Miller Physical Therapy. Please contact me with any questions: smiller@cardinmillerpt.com my column appears in the Sentinel's Thrive section biweekly and on-line via Cumberlink.com