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ROTATOR CUFF TEARS

Rotator cuff tears are a very common shoulder injury that occurs in as much as 40% of people nation-wide. The prevalence increases with age and can be caused by anything from a traumatic fall to rolling over while sleeping. The rotator cuff muscles sustain a lot of wear and tear throughout a life span and are required to perform repetitive and daily tasks. When the muscle group is injured, it can have a huge impact on daily function. Surgery is sometimes recommended, but not always. Newer research is demonstrating that there is a portion of the population that can recover and function well without undergoing rotator cuff surgery, and instead recovering with the help of physical therapy. Check out this month's blog and see what physical therapy can do for a rotator cuff tear.

AROUND THE CLINIC:

Beginning in June, you may have noticed that we are improving our patient care by being able to see our patients for longer. Instead of our appointment times being every 30 minutes, we have increased that time to 40 minutes to maximize patient care and meet the needs of our patients. We have had outstanding feedback from many patients who are so happy and appreciative to get more time with their providers. Although this sometimes makes for some strange appointment times, such as 8:40 am or 2:20 pm, it overall has been a great improvement and we hope that you know we are striving for the best customer care and quality of service. Thanks for adjusting to this change with grace and understanding.



Spotlight Diagnosis of the Month

Diagnosis: Rotator Cuff Tear

What is it? A rotator cuff tear can occur due to chronic overuse of the shoulder joint or with acute traumatic events, such as a fall. Rotator cuff tears can present as either “partial thickness” or “full thickness” tears. This is based on the severity of injury sustained to the muscle or tendon.

Partial thickness tears are most commonly treated with conservative treatment like Physical Therapy. Full thickness tears can be managed conservatively as well, but they are commonly surgically repaired. Chronic rotator cuff tears are often not operable due to poor tendon health and atrophy of the rotator cuff muscle. Physical therapy can be an important management option for non-operable, chronic rotator cuff tears.

Common Symptoms:

- Pain over the top of the shoulder or down the outside of the arm.
- Shoulder weakness.
- Loss of shoulder motion.
- Inability to lift the arm to reach overhead or reach behind the back.

How Physical Therapy Can Help:

Once a rotator cuff tear has been diagnosed, the patient will work with an orthopedist and a physical therapist to determine if surgical intervention is needed or if nonsurgical management is more appropriate. Physical therapy is the most appropriate treatment of nonsurgical management.

Physical therapy will help restore shoulder range of motion, improve muscle strength, decrease pain, improve coordination to allow for return to your normal activities, and to help decrease the risk of re-injury in the future. Treatment plans are individualized based on the patient’s goals and what type of activities they want to return to.

If surgical intervention is determined to be the most appropriate treatment, physical therapy can help you, both before and after the procedure. Physical therapy is an important part of your recovery from surgery and treatment includes normalizing range of motion, improving rotator cuff and other surrounding shoulder muscles strength, and improving overall function. Your surgeon will provide a post-op protocol and the physical therapist will help educate you on expected progressions and guide you through the protocol. Following surgery, your shoulder will be susceptible to re-injury and it’s important to follow the postoperative instructions provided by the surgeon and physical therapist.

This section is to provide details about commonly seen diagnoses or injuries in our clinic and how Therapy may help.

Please assist our office and confirm your appointments electronically so we know you are coming, and please continue to call our office if you need to reschedule

