

# Common Causes of Shoulder Pain

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The arm bone (humerus) and the shoulder blade (scapula) form the main joint of the shoulder referred to as the glenohumeral joint. The shoulder joint fits together like a golf ball sitting on a tee (glenoid). The shoulder joint is capable of a larger range of motion than most joints in your body. It is because the shoulder is so flexible that it tends to be unstable and can result in a variety of problems. One warning sign that you may be experiencing shoulder problems is if you have a soreness after activities that require you to lift your arms (painting, lifting, athletic activities).

Two common causes of shoulder pain are tendonitis and bursitis. Tendons are strong cords that attach muscles to bone and when these become sore and swollen it is known as tendonitis. Bursa are fluid filled sacs that cushion a joint and decrease friction caused by movements of the joint and when bursa becomes sore and swollen it is known as bursitis. Both of these conditions are usually a result of excessive use of the shoulder.

The shoulder joint is supported by the rotator cuff which is made up of four muscles that surround the arm bone to help keep the shoulder steady as the arm moves. Pain is experienced when there is a tear in the rotator cuff resulting from the progressive worsening of tendonitis, repetitive strain, or trauma. If the rotator cuff is involved, pain is usually experienced in the front or outside of the shoulder. Pain is usually worse when you raise your arm and pain at night is common. Adhesive Capsulitis is the inability to move your arm because of tightness in the joint. Most often, any attempts to move the shoulder are painful. This is also known as frozen shoulder because your shoulder appears to be stiff or frozen. Frozen shoulder can occur if you do not use your shoulder enough (due to pain) or if you use it the wrong way.

When the bones of the shoulder are not held together as tight as they should be it is known as instability. The ligaments and muscles around the joint are weak and can allow the bones in the shoulder joints to move out of their normal position. This can lead to subluxation, which is a quick movement of the bone in and out of the joint, or to a dislocation, which is similar to a subluxation, except the bone moves out of place but not back in. Both of these conditions can be very painful and cause tissue damage, stretching, and tearing of surrounding muscles and ligaments. An impingement is another painful condition that can occur if there is not enough room to function within the shoulder joint. This can result from a bone spur in the shoulder joint, inflammation of a tendon traveling between the two bones causing it to become pinched with certain movements, or it can also be caused by poor posture.

Relief from many of these shoulder problems can be achieved through rest from repetitive or stressful activities, ice, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medication often prescribed by a physician, and in severe cases, surgery. You should schedule an appointment with your physician or physical therapist if you have experienced shoulder pain that is intense or if symptoms persist.