



Points To Remember About Shoulder Problems

- Most shoulder problems happen when the soft tissues in the shoulder break down.
- Shoulder problems vary widely and can include; dislocation, separation, rotator cuff disease, rotator cuff tear, frozen shoulder, fracture, and arthritis.
- The symptoms of your shoulder problems will depend on the specific type of problem you are having.
- Your doctor will recommend treatment depending on your type of shoulder problem.

What are shoulder problems?

Most shoulder problems happen when soft tissues in the joint and shoulder region break down.

Who gets shoulder problems?

Men, women, and children can have shoulder problems. They occur in people of all races and ethnic backgrounds.

What are the types of shoulder problems?

Shoulder problems vary widely. Doctors usually describe the problem by the type, for example:

- Dislocation, happens when the ball of your top arm bone pops out of your socket.
- Separation, happens when the ligaments between the collarbone and the shoulder blade area tear.
- Rotator cuff disease, such as tendinitis and bursitis, happens when tendons in the shoulder inflame or become red, sore or swollen.
- Torn rotator cuff, a tear in the tendon in the rotator cuff.
- Frozen shoulder or adhesive capsulitis, happens when movement of the shoulder is restricted.
- Fracture, is a crack or break in a bone, usually in the collarbone or upper arm bone.
- [Arthritis](#), can be one of two types:

- [Osteoarthritis](#), happens when over time the cartilage in the joint wears down and the bones rub together.
- [Rheumatoid arthritis](#) is a disease that happens when your immune system causes inflammation in a joint.

What are the symptoms of shoulder problems?

The symptoms of your shoulder problems will depend on the specific type of problem you are having.

Dislocation

The signs and symptoms of dislocation in the shoulder include:

- Pain.
- Swelling.
- Numbness.
- Weakness.
- Bruising.
- The arm appears out of position.

Separation

The signs and symptoms of shoulder separation include:

- Pain and tenderness.
- A bump in the middle of the top of the shoulder.

Rotator Cuff Disease

The signs and symptoms of rotator cuff disease may be due to tendinitis or bursitis and may include a slow onset of pain:

- In the upper part of your arm.
- When trying to sleep on your shoulder.
- That travels down your arm.
- That worsens when you lift your arm away from the body or over your head.

Torn Rotator Cuff

The signs and symptoms of a torn rotator cuff include:

- Pain in the muscle in the top of the arm and the outer shoulder.
- Increased pain when lifting the arm or extending it out and lowering the arm back down.
- Weakness.
- A popping or clicking noise when moving the shoulder.

Frozen Shoulder

The signs and symptoms of a frozen shoulder include:

- Stiffness in the joint.
- Tightness.
- Unable to lift the arm.

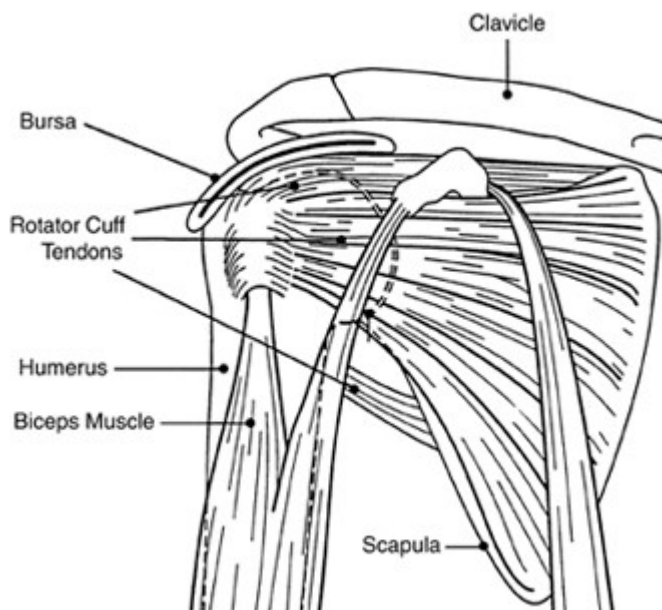
Fracture

The signs and symptoms of a fracture include:

- Severe pain.
- Redness.
- Bruising.
- The bones may appear out of position.

Arthritis

The signs and symptoms of [arthritis](#) of the shoulder include:



What causes shoulder

problems?

Most shoulder problems happen when the soft tissues in the shoulder break down. This can happen when you:

- Repeat the same motion with your shoulder.
- Age.
- Use the shoulder too much, especially if you are older.
- Perform manual labor.
- Injure the shoulder, sometimes from playing sports or falling.

Is there a test for shoulder problems?

Doctors diagnose shoulder problems by:

- Asking about your medical history.
- Performing a physical exam.
- Ordering tests, such as:
 - X-rays.
 - Ultrasound.
 - Magnetic resonance imaging or MRI.

How are shoulder problems treated?

Dislocation

Treatment for a shoulder dislocation may also include:

- Your doctor placing the ball of your upper arm back into the socket.
- Wearing a sling or device to keep your shoulder in place.
- Exercises to improve
 - Range of motion.
 - Strengthen muscles.
 - Prevent injuries.
- Surgery if you injure the tissues or nerves around the shoulder.

Separation

Treatment for a shoulder separation may also include:

- A sling to keep your shoulder in place.
- Exercise, after a time of rest.
- Surgery if the tear is severe.

Rotator Cuff Disease

Treatment for tendinitis and bursitis includes:

- Medicines such as aspirin and ibuprofen to help lower your pain and swelling
- Ultrasound to warm deep tissues and improve blood flow to the area of your injury.
- Injection of a corticosteroid drug if your shoulder is not getting better.
- Surgery if after 6 to 12 months your shoulder is not better.

Rotator Cuff Tear

Treatment for a rotator cuff tear may also include:

- Heat or cold to the sore area of your injury.
- Medicines to help your pain and swelling.
- Electrical stimulation of your muscles and nerves.
- Ultrasound to warm deep tissues and improve blood flow to the area of your injury.
- Injection of a cortisone medicine into your shoulder joint.
- Surgery to repair the tear if you don't see improvement with other treatments.

Frozen Shoulder

Treatment for a frozen shoulder may also include:

- Medicines to help with pain and swelling.
- Heat to the sore area.
- Stretching exercises.
- Nerve and muscle stimulation using a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS).
- Injection of a corticosteroid drug if your shoulder is not better.
- Surgery if the shoulder does not improve with other treatments.

Fracture

Treatment for a fracture may include:

- A doctor putting the bones into a position to promote healing.
- A sling or other device to keep the bones in place.
- After the bone heals, exercise to strengthen the shoulder and restore movement.

- Surgery.

Arthritis

Treatment for [arthritis](#) may include:

- Medicines to help with pain and swelling.
- Physical therapy.

If you injure a shoulder, try the following:

- **Rest.** Don't use your shoulder for 48 hours
- **Ice.** Put an ice pack on your injured shoulder for 20 minutes, four to eight times per day. You can use a:
 - Cold pack.
 - Ice bag.
 - Plastic bag filled with crushed ice wrapped in a towel.
- **Compression.** Put even pressure or compression on the painful area to help reduce the swelling to your shoulder. A wrap or bandage will help hold your shoulder in place.
- **Elevation.** If you are able, keep the injured area above the level of your heart. Using a pillow under your shoulder will help.

For more info

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

[Drugs@FDA](#) at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf> [Drugs@FDA](#) is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Website: <https://www.aaos.org>

American College of Rheumatology

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

Website: <https://www.sportsmed.org>

American Physical Therapy Association

Website: <https://www.apta.org>

American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons

Website: <https://www.ases-assn.org>

Arthritis Foundation

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)