

# Rotator Cuff

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- Access Baylor Health Care System specialized sports medicine physicians\* and services throughout the Metroplex
- Medical coverage at games and events utilizing physicians, nurses and licensed athletic trainers
- Educational programs on injury prevention & performance enhancement
- Comprehensive medical support for groups, teams and individuals

For more information about SportsCare, or for help in finding a physician who is right for you, contact your local SportsCare representative at

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## Definition

Your rotator cuff is made up of the muscles and tendons in your shoulder. These muscles and tendons connect your upper arm bone with your shoulder blade. They also help hold the ball of your upper arm bone firmly in your shoulder socket. The combination results in the greatest range of motion of any joint in your body.

A rotator cuff injury includes any type of irritation or damage to your rotator cuff muscles or tendons. Causes of a rotator cuff injury may include falling, lifting and repetitive arm activities — especially those done overhead, such as baseball, tennis or swimming.

About half of the time, a rotator cuff injury can heal with self-care measures or exercise therapy

## Causes

Four major muscles (subscapularis, supraspinatus, infraspinatus and teres minor) and their tendons connect your upper arm bone (humerus) with your shoulder blade (scapula). A rotator cuff injury, which is fairly common, involves any type of irritation or damage to your rotator cuff muscles or tendons, including:

- General wear and tear as you get older or participate in repetitive movement activities
- **Tendinitis.** Tendons in your rotator cuff can become inflamed due to overuse or overload, especially if you're an athlete who performs a lot of overhead activities, such as in tennis or racquetball.
- **Bursitis.** The fluid-filled sac (bursa) between your shoulder joint and rotator cuff tendons can become irritated and inflamed.
- **Strain or tear.** Left untreated, tendinitis can weaken a tendon and lead to chronic tendon degeneration or to a tendon tear. Stress from overuse also can cause a shoulder tendon or muscle to tear.

## Treatment and Interventions

Most of the time, rest and exercise therapy are used as a treatment. Your doctor or a physical therapist will talk with you about specific exercises designed to help heal your injury, improve the flexibility of your rotator cuff and shoulder muscles, and provide balanced shoulder muscle strength. Depending on the severity of your injury, physical therapy may take from several weeks to several months to reach maximum effectiveness.

Other rotator cuff injury treatments may include:

- **Steroid injections.** Depending on the severity of your pain, your doctor may use a corticosteroid injection to relieve inflammation and pain.
- **Surgery.** If you have a large tear in your rotator cuff, you may need surgery to repair the tear. Sometimes during this kind of surgery doctors may remove a bone spur or calcium deposits. The surgery may be performed as an open repair, as a mini-open repair, or as an arthroscopic repair with the aid of a small camera inserted through a smaller incision.
- **Arthroplasty.** Some long-standing rotator cuff tears over time may contribute to the development of rotator cuff arthropathy, which can include severe arthritis. In such cases, your doctor may discuss with you more extensive surgical options, including partial shoulder replacement (hemiarthroplasty) or total shoulder replacement (prosthetic arthroplasty).



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