

GOAL POST

Rotator Cuff Tendonitis: PART 2

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From **Part 1** of this article, recall our swimming and throwing athletes who started having pain in their shoulders with the repetitive motions involved in their respective sports.

Why is rotator cuff tendonitis an injury common in throwers and swimmers? In addition to factors that contribute to rotator cuff tendonitis in the general population, these athletes experience unique risk factors.

Factors that put freestyle swimmers at increased risk:

- Poor technique such as:
 - Breathing on one side only (especially repeatedly during practice)
 - Asymmetrical body rotation
 - Improper hand entry into the water (thumb first)
 - Crossing midline of body during the stroke phase
 - Suboptimal arm position during catch and pull through (dropped elbow or straight arm)
- High repetition of movement and high workload
- Poor rotator cuff strengthening and scapular stabilization programs

Treatment for Rotator Cuff Tendonitis

Initially, treatment for tendonitis consists of ice and relative rest (i.e. decreasing workload, but not necessarily stopping throwing, depending on the severity of the condition) in order to decrease pain and inflammation. In addition, maintaining and regaining shoulder and shoulder blade mobility is important.

Ultimately, rotator cuff tendonitis can usually be successfully treated by correcting the biomechanical factors mentioned in Part 1. Stretching and strengthening to encourage proper muscle balance (strength and flexibility) is necessary to help stabilize the shoulder joint and decrease the risk of re-injury. A physiotherapist may be very helpful in accomplishing these corrections. A technique called active release therapy (ART) has been proven clinically useful in treating shoulder joint tightness. Occasionally, anti-inflammatory medication and/or cortisone injections are needed to settle down the inflammation. Pain that lasts for more than a few weeks should be assessed by a physician.

Treatment for rotator cuff tendonitis is generally conservative (ie. physiotherapy, athletic therapy and chiropractic care) with a proper plan for graduated return to full sports participation. In severe or ongoing cases, the inflammation can cause the deterioration of the tendon and eventually partial tearing which may require surgery. Intervention is needed to prevent this. When pain occurs, the healing process should be monitored by a health care professional to ensure proper healing occurs and the person is safely returned to sport or activity without this added complication. (*cont'd page 2*)

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Prevention of Rotator Cuff Tendonitis

As mentioned, preventing the initial injury or re-injury of the rotator cuff can be accomplished with proper muscle balance, stability, and mechanics. Many strengthening programs do not properly address these issues. Therefore, a consultation with a sports-focused rehabilitation professional (physiotherapist, chiropractor, or athletic therapist) is recommended for high risk athletes, in addition to working with knowledgeable coaches to develop proper technique (guest coaches with high level certification and skills camps are great places to access these individuals). Proper off-season shoulder conditioning exercises and whole body conditioning, as well as targeted stretching programs, good warm-up and cool-down with practice and games, and avoiding overuse when the arm and shoulder are fatigued, can go a long way in preventing these and other injuries.

Let's Get 'HUMERUS'

#swimmerproblems

- > Not being able to tell who your teammates are when they have clothes and makeup on.
- > You hear an electronic beep and you instantly jump.
- > When the person behind you constantly touches your feet but still insists on going after you.
- > Accepting the fact that you will probably smell like chlorine for the rest of your life.

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The swimmer who says, "It can't be done" is passed by the swimmer who is doing it.



Tips & Tricks

Sports Recovery

Recovery after competition and workouts is essential to preventing injury and maintaining conditioning. After a rigorous workout or competition it is most important to refuel within the first 3 hours after. During these first 3 hours our glycogen stores (energy sources) are most depleted and receptive to restoration. Eating a meal high in carbohydrates will help to restore these energy stores quickly and efficiently. Even if you do not feel like eating after competition try drinking a beverage high in carbohydrates such as chocolate milk.

STAFF PROFILE

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Education

- > Bachelor of Kinesiology from McMaster University.
- > Masters in Physiotherapy from McMaster University.

Post Graduate

- > Level 1 Manual Therapy
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Focused Interest s and Skills

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