



Osteoarthritis of the Shoulder

Osteoarthritis of the shoulder (shoulder OA) is a condition that occurs when the cartilage that lines the sides of the shoulder joint is worn or torn away. It may be caused by injury or dislocation of the shoulder, or “wear and tear” of the shoulder over time.

Shoulder OA develops most often in people in their 50s, and beyond. However, shoulder OA also can develop in younger people after trauma or surgery to a joint. The condition occurs more frequently in women than men. Shoulder OA may cause you to experience:

- Pain with activities that relieves with rest
- Decreased shoulder movement (range of motion), especially when reaching back as if grabbing a seat belt
- Weakness
- Stiffness and eventual difficulty using the affected arm
- Pain at rest and difficulty sleeping as the condition worsens

HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP WITHOUT SURGERY

When someone develops shoulder pain, the first recommended treatment is physical therapy. The following treatments may prolong the time until surgery is needed, or help you avoid it altogether:

- Improving tolerance of daily activities.
- Improving shoulder mobility.
- Improving the strength of your muscles.

FOLLOWING SURGERY

There are several surgical options for treating shoulder OA, depending on the degree of damage at the joint and its surrounding structures, and your age, activity level, and occupation. Postsurgical physical therapy varies based on the procedure performed. It may include:

- Ensuring your safety as you heal.
- Aiding motion of the shoulder.
- Strengthening the shoulder.
- Relieving your pain.
- Getting back to work and activities of daily living.