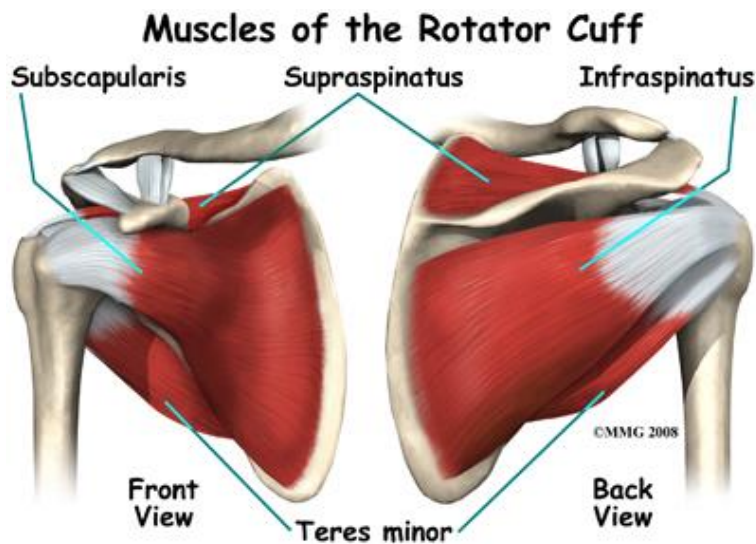


ROTATOR CUFF TEARS

What is rotator cuff tear?

The rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles and tendons that surround the top of the upper arm bone (humerus) and functions to help rotate the arm and stabilize the shoulder joint (ball and socket joint). A rotator cuff tear may result suddenly (traumatic event) or develop gradually over time (degenerative tear).



How did I get a rotator cuff tear?

Rotator cuff tears are classified as partial or full thickness tears. Partial-thickness tears do not completely sever the tendon where full thickness tears do. Full thickness rotator cuff tears are rarely seen in those younger than 40 years of age and are usually due to a traumatic event. On the other hand, 25% of all individuals over the age of 60 have a rotator cuff tear. Full thickness rotator cuff tears do not heal, or repair themselves. In fact, most rotator cuff tears will increase in size over time. Treatment will be dependent on the thickness and size of your tear.

How is it diagnosed?

Dr. Comfort will examine your range of motion and strength of your shoulder muscles, as well as look at the top and back of your shoulder examined to see if the muscles have begun to shrink (atrophy) which can indicate a rotator cuff tear. X-rays may be taken to see any problems with the bones or alignment. If a rotator cuff tear is suspected an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), may be required to confirm a rotator cuff tear and if it is a partial or full thickness tear.

How are rotator cuff tears treated?

Conservative Treatment

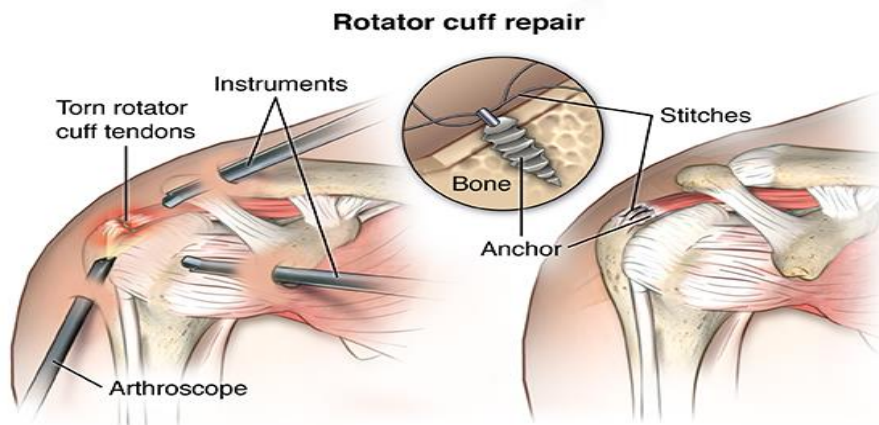
Non-surgical treatment may involve a combination of modalities including:

1. Rest. If the tear is due in part to overuse, resting the shoulder may help.
2. Physical therapy to restore flexibility and strengthen the shoulder muscles.
3. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications may help control pain.
4. Cortisone injection can help reduce pain and restore function as you heal.



Surgical Intervention

Dr. Comfort will discuss with you the best surgical option to treat your rotator cuff tear depending on the size, depth, and location of the tear. A camera will be placed in your shoulder through some small incisions (arthroscopy) to examine the rotator cuff and other shoulder structures. Your rotator cuff may be repairable through the scope or a mini-open technique may be used if necessary to achieve the best surgical outcome.



What can I expect after surgery?

Dr. Comfort will provide you with specific post-operative instructions which will be included with your discharge paperwork from the surgical center/hospital.

Rehabilitation

Recovery from a rotator cuff repair surgery takes several months. Full functioning may not return for six months or more. After a rotator cuff repair surgery, patients are required to wear a shoulder immobilizer to protect your repaired rotator cuff. A physical therapy program will be required after surgery and progress to exercises to strengthen the shoulder and restore motion.