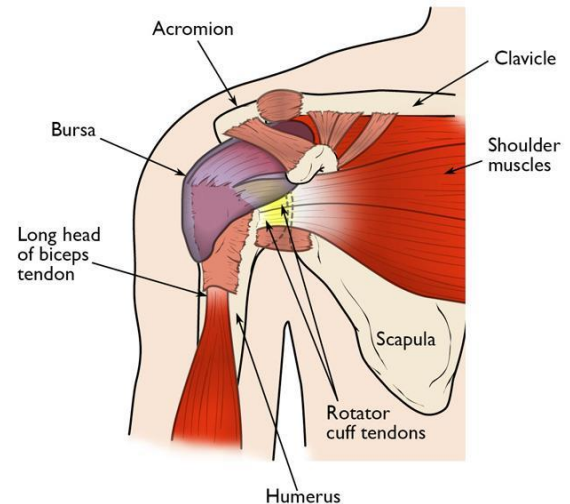


Rotator Cuff Bursitis

What is a bursa?

A bursa is a fluid filled sac that sits between tissue and a bone. They help to reduce friction as the tissues glide across the bone. In the shoulder, the subacromial bursa sits between the acromion and the rotator cuff. The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that helps to lift and rotate the shoulder.



Why do they become irritated?

The rotator cuff bursa can become irritated for a variety of reasons. Excessive use of the shoulder can sometime cause inflammation and swelling within the bursa. This can occur from repetitive activity, improper posture or mechanics, or a traumatic event. Some people may be more prone to this condition due to the shape of their bones.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of rotator cuff bursitis can be very similar to a rotator cuff tear. Typically, patients complain of pain along the side or back of the shoulder, especially with overhead activity. Often times, the pain is worse with any lifting away from the body. Occasionally, people describe pain at night or difficulty sleeping.

Do I need surgery?

Typically, people with rotator cuff bursitis can be treated with conservative treatment including modifying activities, over-the-counter anti-inflammatories, physical therapy, and/or injections. The major focus of treatment involves physical therapy to work on stretching, muscular balance, and proper posture. If modifications in your activity and appropriate physical therapy are not effective in reducing symptoms, then corticosteroid injections may be considered. Occasionally, if your symptoms continue to limit you despite conservative treatment, surgery may be recommended. The goal of surgery would be to remove the bursa and decompress the space where the bursa exists.

Are there any adverse outcomes?

If left untreated, rotator cuff bursitis can lead to continued limitations in your daily activities. Corticosteroid injections can be helpful, but they are not without risk. The risks should be discussed with your orthopedic team. Surgery also poses some risks including infection, anesthetic complications, blood clots, cardiopulmonary complications, and stiffness.