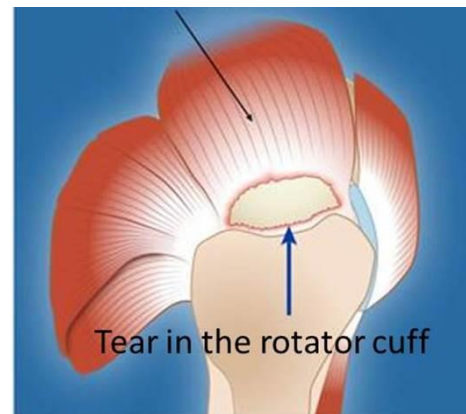
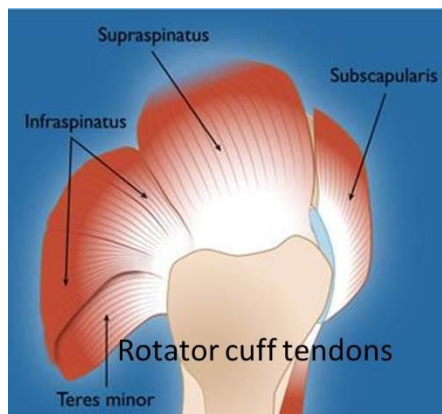


Rotator Cuff Tear

What is the Rotator cuff?

The rotator cuff is a group of 4 muscles and tendons that connect the shoulder blade (scapula) to the outer portion of the arm bone (humerus). They help to hold the ball of the humerus to the shallow socket of the scapula and rotate the ball in the socket. Each tendon is attached to a muscle that helps to lift and rotate the shoulder.



Why do they tear?

The rotator cuff can tear for a variety of reasons. Most people will experience a tear to their rotator cuff at some point in their life as they age, however many people do not have symptoms with age related degenerative tears. Acutely, the rotator cuff can tear after a traumatic event. Occasionally, the rotator cuff can tear from a high-impact trauma such as a car accident. It is uncommon for the rotator cuff to tear in individuals younger than 40 though increases as we age.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of a rotator cuff tear can vary depending on the nature of the 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. Other symptoms include weakness and catching/popping.

Do I need surgery?

Not all rotator cuff tears are repairable or require surgery. Many people can be treated with conservative treatment including over-the-counter anti-inflammatories, physical therapy, and/or injections. People with acute full thickness tears that are significantly interfering with their daily life and work activities should be considered for surgical treatment. Individuals with continued pain, weakness, and limitations despite appropriate physical therapy may also be considered for surgical treatment. Recovery from rotator cuff surgery is long, challenging, and oftentimes painful, so it should not be pursued without adequate consideration of the entire patient.

Are there any adverse outcomes?

Tears in the rotator cuff can lead to decreased function, particularly with overhead activity. Untreated tears may increase in size and risk progressive degeneration of the shoulder. Surgery poses some risks including infection, anesthesia complications, blood clots, cardiopulmonary complications, and stiffness. Large rotator cuff tears may not heal completely or may re-rupture after surgery.