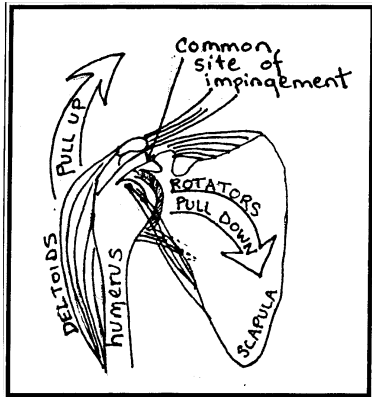


Rotator Cuff Impingement Syndrome

The rotator cuff is a term most of us have heard. Many people suffer from different problems involving the rotator cuff muscles.



The rotator cuff is literally a cuff over the top of the humerus (upper arm bone).

Because the shoulder joint is such a shallow joint, (minimal contact between the humerus, scapula and clavicle: collar bone) it requires a strong muscular component to prevent unwanted motion. Without the rotator cuff, the strong deltoid muscles would pull the humerus too high in the shoulder joint, causing structures to get pinched. If the rotator cuff is performing normally it will pull the tip of the humerus down as the deltoids pull the arm up. (See diagram)

When the humerus glides too far superior, one can suffer from rotator cuff impingement, which is a

condition that causes pain when lifting the arm. This situation can occur during vigorous and repetitive overhead sport activities that involve elevation and rotation of the shoulder joint. Some examples are a tennis serve, baseball pitch and swimming.

Primary treatment is prevention through use of correct training procedures. Emphasis is placed on strengthening the rotator cuff muscles and increasing their endurance for activity. Without sufficient training, the rotator cuff muscles fatigue and the deltoids pull the top of the humerus too far superior into the shoulder joint causing pain. Rotator cuff strengthening requires very specific motions, generally not covered with basic weight training. If shoulder impingement problems are not addressed, the risk of rotator cuff tendonitis or a rotator cuff tear increases.

Physical therapy modalities can help decrease the pain of impingement syndrome followed by specific exercises for the rotator cuff muscles to improve strength and endurance.