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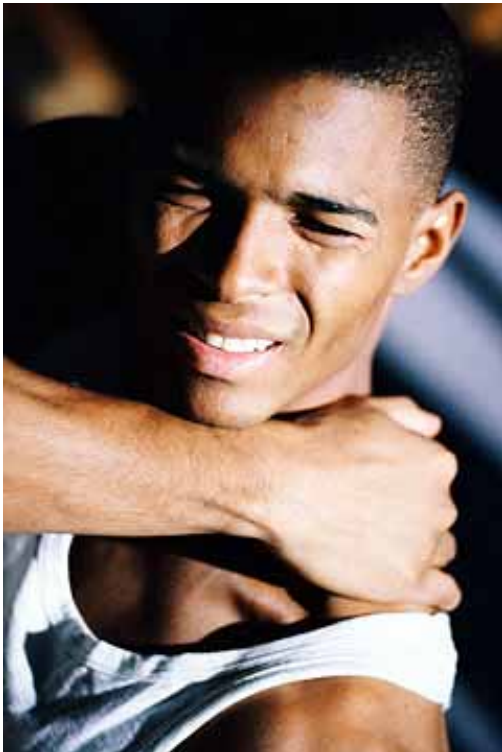
# Shoulder Overuse: What You Need to Know

Posted on Dec 20th 2010 11:00AM by [Kyle Stack](#)

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It's said that well-built shoulders can make a man look taller. Yet you'll feel anything but tall and strapping if you become plagued with shoulder overuse.

According to a 2009 article by [AskMen.com](#), 20 percent of sports injuries involve the [shoulder](#). A common

type of shoulder [injury](#) is overuse, and it can occur in almost any kind of physical activity. "We'll see people gradually develop [rotator cuff](#) tendonitis or a tear that can develop from a condition we call [impingement](#)," said Dr. Keith D. Nord, president and CEO of Sports, Orthopedic and Spine in Jackson, Tenn. "It comes from using your arm in front of you or above you most often."

Dr. Asheesh Bedi, an assistant professor in the University of Michigan's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, specified that overuse can be identified by clinical exams and [imaging](#) as repetitive micro-trauma in the rotator cuff's tendons. Here's how to identify, treat and prevent the injury:

### How to Identify

Bedi explained several telltale signs of overuse: an inability to [lift weights](#) for the same duration and intensity as in the past, as well as a dull pain or discomfort in a particular area.

Locating the painful area is paramount. "A lot of the pain will radiate to the outside of the shoulder," Nord said. That's because the same nerve that runs inside the shoulder goes to the skin surface of the lateral (outside) portion of the joint. If there's an aching feeling, that means the shoulder needs treatment.

### How to Treat

Identify the underlying cause, according to Bedi. If it's weight lifting or a sporting activity, such as throwing, then a modification of that program is necessary. If it's work related, then do anything in reason to avoid it.

Nord explained weight room lifts such as the military press, bench press and incline bench press are the most troublesome. "Those types of activities tend to cause the outside part of the shoulder, where the rotator cuff attaches, [to pinch] up against the bone on the top of the shoulder," he said.

Surgery isn't normally required except in the most extreme cases. Instead, rely on a modification of current exercises with an eye on rest if the problem persists. Ice and anti-inflammatories will speed the recovery.

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### How to Prevent

Avoid activities that put an inordinate amount of strain on the shoulders. "Weight-lifting exercises done far away from the body, such as flys, can place a lot of strain on the rotator cuff," Bedi emphasized.

He said that every pound of weight in an exercise performed close to the body is equivalent to 30 pounds of strain on the rotator cuff in an exercise held away from the body.

In light of that, Nord advised performing internal and external rotation exercises. They can be done on a cable machine with cables at a 45-degree angle, although free-form exercises with stretch bands or low-weight dumbbells also work.

And no matter what you do, always be cognizant of how the shoulder feels after physical activity. There's no shame in suspending an exercise regimen or modifying the way you use your shoulders at work. A recuperation period is necessary if pain subsists. And then you can walk tall with a healthy pair of shoulders.