

SHOULDER AND ARM PAIN

The cause of many instances of shoulder or arm pain is obvious. You do something to injure the arm or shoulder and immediately feel pain. Or you begin feeling the pain a day or so later. You may have broken a bone or dislocated your shoulder.

Perhaps you strained tendons or ligaments by carrying too much weight for too long, by lifting something that was too heavy, overreaching or overexerting your arm--as when playing sports when you're out of shape--or by keeping your arm in an awkward position, or even by sleeping on the shoulder. The resulting pain may range from an annoying ache to acute pain that makes it hard for you to use the injured arm. Fortunately, the majority of such injuries are seldom critical.

But there are other, less-obvious causes of shoulder or arm pain. Each is distinguished by where it is felt, whether it comes on suddenly or over time, when it is at its worst, if the pain extends to other joints in your body, and if other symptoms--such as swelling, numbness, tingling, fever, fatigue, and insomnia--accompany the pain. The causes of shoulder and arm pain include tendonitis, bursitis, arthritis, and gout. Such pain may also result from a reaction to medications such as penicillin, anti-anxiety drugs, and oral contraceptives. Whiplash injuries, common in auto accidents, can also cause shoulder and arm pain.



Shoulder and arm pain may be referred from some other region of the body, as when someone suffering a heart attack feels pain in the left shoulder and down the left arm. The pain may also be referred from nerves associated with the joints in the upper spine or "trigger points" in the back, which are particularly responsive to chiropractic spinal adjustments designed to treat such problems.

What can chiropractic do?

The doctor will examine you and conduct diagnostic tests to determine exactly what is causing your shoulder or arm pain. Because the causes and the seriousness of different conditions are so varied, it is important to pinpoint the cause and begin the most appropriate treatment. He or she will discover if your problem is mild and transitory or serious and likely to trouble you for a long time. A broken bone cannot be treated in the same manner as bursitis or tendonitis. Arthritis and gout call for different care than pain originating in nerves supplying the shoulder and arm. Your chiropractor will decide which treatment will be best for you and if referral to a specialist will be necessary.

Chiropractic can be successfully employed to deal with so-called frozen shoulder, a severe inflammation technically known as adhesive capsulitis. Chiropractors are accustomed to relieving painful trigger points between the spine and shoulder. Many chiropractors, especially those with additional training in sports medicine, are experienced in the care and rehabilitation of professional and amateur athletes who have injured their shoulders or arms. And all chiropractors can help you modify your habits and lifestyle to protect yourself from arm and shoulder injuries and ailments.



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