

Shoulder Impingement Syndrome

What is shoulder impingement syndrome?

Impingement syndrome of the shoulder is a term used to describe symptoms that result from the compression of the structures found below the roof of the shoulder.

What are the signs and symptoms?

It is characterised by generalised shoulder pain which can refer down the arm. The pain is aggravated by overhead activities. A catching sensation can be felt on lowering the arm. Most patients complain of night pain and find it difficult to lie on the affected shoulder.

What causes it?

Impingement occurs when there is a reduction in the space between the roof of the shoulder and the arm bone. This may be due to inflammation of the structures found below the roof of the shoulder. Degenerative changes in the shoulder may lead to formation of bony spurs or thickening of the ligaments resulting in impingement.

Muscle imbalance around the shoulder region lead to altered movement patterns which in turn reduces the space below the roof of the shoulder leading to shoulder impingement.

Treatment

Doctors will usually prescribe anti-inflammatory drugs and refer the patient to a physiotherapist for expert advice on pain relief and exercises. Exercises are given to improve the strength and control of muscles around the shoulder joint. This helps to restore normal movement pattern.

Below are some exercises that may help with your shoulder pain:

Shoulder Blade Setting



Set your shoulders square by pulling your shoulder blades downwards.
Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

Pendular Shoulder Exercises



Standing supported. Lean your body forward and let your painful arm hang by your side. Let your arm swing forwards and backwards like the pendulum of a clock.

Repeat 10 times.

This should not be painful, if it is you must stop.



Standing supported. Lean your body forwards and let your painful arm hang by your side. Let your arm swing from side to side like the pendulum of a clock.

Repeat 10 times.

This should not be painful, if it is you must stop.

Distraction Exercise



Place a rolled towel underneath your painful arm. With your other hand pull your arm downwards and across your body.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 5 times.

If physiotherapy does not help a cortisone injection (s) may be given to reduce inflammation and decrease pain. In some cases surgery may be required to remove bony spurs and increase the space below the roof of the shoulder.

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