

Give Your Rotator Cuff Pain the Cold Shoulder

Have you ever experienced a dull ache or sharp pain in your shoulder or upper arm? Maybe you are unable to sleep on one side because your shoulder wakes you up at night. Perhaps, you have discomfort reaching behind your back to tuck in your shirt or grab your wallet. If so, you may be suffering from a rotator cuff injury.

Rotator cuff injuries, such as tendonitis, bursitis and tears affects nearly 30% of the people in our population. Whether you suffer from an acute injury or chronic pain, tendonitis, or even a rotator cuff tear, one thing is certain – you need to reduce the inflammation in your shoulder if you want to eliminate the pain.

The first step in this process is to apply cold compressive therapy to the affected shoulder. With this treatment, you begin to attack the inflammation which is actually causing much if not all of your pain. Swelling in the subacromial bursa is common, as well as inflammation around the tendons of the rotator cuff itself. Icing these areas will help decrease your pain and swelling.

In addition, the element of compression will aid in the healing process and help prevent recurrences of inflammation moving forward. Applying cold therapy immediately after exercise or increased activity is effective in minimizing inflammation and speeding recovery. It is also beneficial to utilize cold treatment prior to sleep in order to reduce nocturnal pain disturbances.

As pain and inflammation subside, you must begin performing effective range of motion and strengthening exercises to rehabilitate the injured area. Appropriate rotator cuff exercises will help eliminate muscle imbalances and weakness, while returning the shoulder to pre-injury functional levels.

A typical strengthening program may last 4-6 weeks. Resolution of your symptoms is often related to the length of time that has passed since the onset of pain, any arthritic changes, age, activity levels and whether there happens to be a partial or complete rotator cuff tear. With that said, it is always important to keep in mind that your individual results rely heavily on activity modification (avoidance of painful maneuvers) and compliance with the prescribed cold therapy and exercise.

So, if you are suffering from rotator cuff pain, begin putting the freeze on your shoulder inflammation today. Invest in a good cold compressive therapy wrap, rest from abusive activities and seek out a qualified medical professional to advise you on safe and effective rehab exercises.

Brian Schiff, PT, CSCS, is a respected author, physical therapist and fitness expert. For information on his proven exercise program for solving rotator cuff pain and shoulder stiffness, visit www.rotatorcufftraining.com.