Rotator cuff related /subacromial pain

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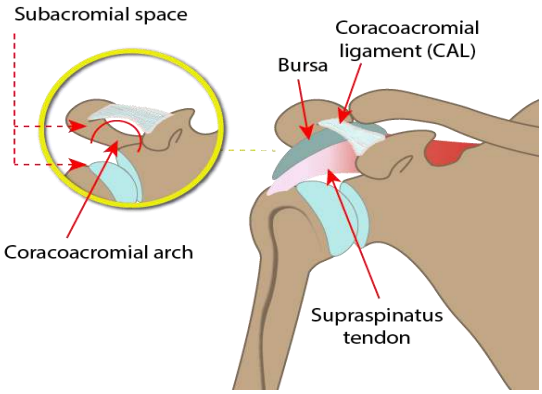
What is rotator cuff related (RCR) / subacromial pain?

The subacromial space is the area between the ball and socket joint of the shoulder.



What are the symptoms of RCR pain?

- Pain around the shoulder or upper arm
- Sleep disturbance

Symptoms can develop either:

- from overuse or;
- after a traumatic event such as a fall

The causes of RCR pain may include muscle weakness, shoulder stiffness and changes to the rotator cuff tendons.

Rotator cuff tendon changes, such as tears, can occur as a natural part of the ageing process. A torn rotator cuff does not always cause pain. It appears more likely that pain occurs as a result of the naturally ageing tendon being overloaded.

How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made from your symptoms, the history of the problem and an examination of your shoulder. Tests such as xrays or scans are not usually required.

How is it treated?

- **Pain relief:** over the counter pain relief such as paracetamol and ibuprofen or anti-inflammatory gels may help you to continue exercising. A steroid injection may be offered if pain is a significant problem.
- **Activity modification:** keep your shoulder moving within the limits of pain.
- Incorporating **general exercise**, such as a brisk 20 minute walk 3 times a week, can really help your recovery too.
- **Exercises**: to improve strength and flexibility.

If you follow the advice and exercises on this leaflet, it is very likely that your symptoms will improve. However, this may take up to 12 weeks. If your symptoms do not improve after this period, please contact your clinician.

Exercises

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You may experience an initial increase in pain with these exercises. Do not worry, just do less repetitions next time and then gradually build up again. Your physiotherapist will guide you as to how many repetitions to do.

WALL SLIDES
Place your hands on a towel against the wall. Step forwards, push into the wall and slide your hands up as far as you can. Return to start position.

PUSH UPS
Put your hands on the wall with your hands placed wider than the width of your shoulders. Press up against the wall. To make it harder, move your feet further away from the wall.

SHOULDER ROTATIONS
Sit next to a table with your elbow on a folded towel. Make a fist, keep your elbow bent and then rotate your forearm to point upwards. Return to the start position and relax. You can hold onto a light weight such as a water bottle to make this exercise harder.

DRAW THE SWORD
Hold the band in your hand on the affected arm. Stand on the end of the band with your foot from the unaffected side.

Pull the band across your body above your head like you are drawing a sword.

References;

https://bess.ac.uk/patient-resource-subacromial-shoulder-pain/

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