

NEXT STEP NEWSLETTER

Next Step
Physical Therapy
(516) 681-8070

July, 2008

Giving you information and answers to any physical therapy, health or fitness related questions

Problems from shoulder instability

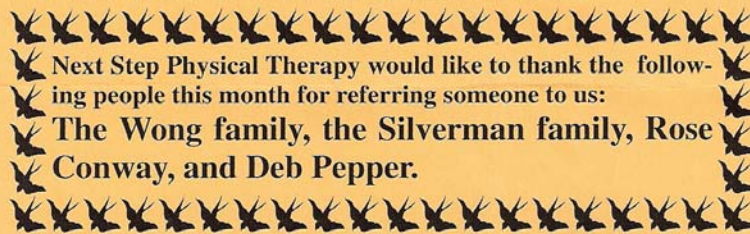
Instability can be a very dramatic or subtle problem of the shoulder. The most obvious problem of an unstable shoulder is a dislocation, when the shoulder "pops" out of the socket and does not "pop" back in. A shoulder that "pops" out of socket but then immediately "pops" back in by itself is called a subluxating shoulder and can also be painful and problematic.

Instability is frequently something you are born with. Minor structural differences in the joint that some people naturally have can make a shoulder more likely to be unstable. Another example would be a lack of ligamentous stability. Ligaments give joints stability, what we consider passive stability, and by shifting the arm bone (humerus) within the joint, a physical therapist can tell if you have a "loose" shoulder. This means that the ligaments are not tightly holding the bone in place. People who are double jointed tend to have "loose" ligaments, hence the extreme flexibility they demonstrate.

Physical therapy treats a "loose" shoulder by trying to increase stability through strengthening of the muscles surrounding the joint. This is called active stability, and when the muscles around a joint contract they provide much more stability as opposed to when they are relaxed. Strengthening muscles also creates a certain amount of stiffness in those muscles, which is also helpful in improving passive stability.

Problems of a more subtle nature (as opposed to dislocation and subluxation) occur due to instability, and are actually much more frequent. For instance, many shoulder tendonitis and bursitis cases are a result of a mildly "loose" shoulder that is moving within the joint too much and causing irritation to either the muscles, ligament or bursa nearby. In these cases, providing more active stability through physical therapy usually corrects the problem and stops the pain.

If you're having shoulder pain, it's important to get evaluated. Don't wait!



Next Step Physical Therapy would like to thank the following people this month for referring someone to us:

The Wong family, the Silverman family, Rose Conway, and Deb Pepper.

W.R. asks: My shoulder clicks a lot. Does that mean that my shoulder is popping out??

Great Question. "Clicking" does not mean that the shoulder is "popping" out. If the shoulder dislocates or subluxates you will know it. You will feel the shoulder literally move out of the socket. The clicking you experience can be coming from the arm (humerus) or the shoulder blade (scapula). This usually signifies that the humerus and the scapula are not in ideal position, in relation to each other, so when you move there is a click as the bones rub against each other. What's important to note is that there is no pain accompanied. If there is pain then you should seek medical help but otherwise I wouldn't be too concerned. While it's not exactly normal, it's extremely common and isn't necessarily a sign of a problem (as long as it doesn't hurt). If it happens very frequently you may want to see a physical therapist because we can show you certain exercises that should be able to eliminate the clicking.

Updates

Welcome to the Next Step Newsletter!

Win a pair of movie tickets!

The first 2 people to call us with the answer to this question wins a pair of movie tickets.

Ligaments provide what type of stability to a joint???

• If you have a friend or family member that you think could use our help please let us know or have them call us.

• If you would like more information on any of the topics discussed here please give us a call.

• If you have a question that you would like to have answered (maybe in the next newsletter) please don't hesitate to call.

• What topics are you interested in and would like to see in the newsletter? Let us know.

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