

Rotator cuff

A parent's guide to signs, symptoms, treatment, and prevention.



Your rotator cuff is made up of the muscles and tendons in your shoulder which connect your upper arm bone with your shoulder blade. They also help hold the ball of your upper arm bone firmly in your shoulder socket.

A rotator cuff injury includes any type of irritation or damage to your rotator cuff muscles or tendons. About half of the time, a rotator cuff injury can heal with self-care measures or exercise therapy.

Causes

Four major muscles (subscapularis, supraspinatus, infraspinatus, and teres minor) and their tendons connect your upper arm bone (humerus) with your shoulder blade (scapula). A rotator cuff injury, which is fairly common, involves any type of irritation or damage to your rotator cuff muscles or tendons, including:

- General wear-and-tear occurs as you get older or participate in repetitive movement activities.
- Tendonitis — tendons in your rotator cuff can become inflamed due to overuse or overload.
- Bursitis — the fluid-filled sac (bursa) between your shoulder joint and rotator cuff tendons can become irritated and inflamed.
- Strain or tear — left untreated, tendonitis can weaken a tendon and lead to chronic tendon degeneration or to a tendon tear.

Treatment and interventions

Most of the time, rest and exercise therapy are used as a treatment. Your doctor or a physical therapist will talk with you about specific exercises designed to help heal your injury, improve the flexibility of your rotator cuff and shoulder muscles, and provide balanced shoulder muscle strength. Depending on the severity of your injury, physical therapy may take from several weeks to several months.

Other rotator cuff injury treatments may include:

- Steroid injections — depending on the severity of your pain, your doctor may use a corticosteroid injection to relieve inflammation and pain.
- Surgery — if you have a large tear in your rotator cuff, you may need surgery to repair the tear. Sometimes during this kind of surgery, doctors may remove a bone spur or calcium deposits.
- Arthroplasty — some long-standing rotator cuff tears over time may contribute to the development of rotator cuff arthropathy, which can include severe arthritis. In such cases, your doctor may discuss with you more extensive surgical options, including partial shoulder replacement (hemiarthroplasty) or total shoulder replacement (prosthetic arthroplasty).



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SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare

SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare is the premier pediatric sports medicine provider in St. Louis and St. Charles. We provide exclusive, direct access to comprehensive medical care for young athletes.

Specialists your child has access to include adolescent medicine physicians, cardiologists, emergency medicine physicians, neurologists, nutritionists, orthopedists, pediatric psychologists, physical therapists, pulmonologists, radiologists, and rehabilitation specialists. We also keep kids in the game through educational programs and supports for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic health.

For more information about SSM Health Cardinal Glennon SportsCare or to find a specialist for your athlete, call or text us **24/7 at 314-577-5640**.

Expert care for young athletes by SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital providers, **24 hours a day in the ER at:** SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, DePaul Hospital, St. Clare Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital-St. Charles, St. Joseph Hospital-Lake St. Louis, Anderson Hospital, and HSHS St. Elizabeth Hospital.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSM Health ministries implemented enhanced safety measures, which are evaluated periodically based on COVID-19 transmission numbers. To ensure your protection and that of others, we continue to require face masks upon entry along with ministry-specific screening processes.