



Sara Gordon & Associates

Physiotherapy Newsletter

Shoulder Impingement Syndrome

Impingement Syndrome, which is sometimes called Swimmer's shoulder or Thrower's shoulder, is caused by the tendons of the rotator cuff becoming impinged or trapped as they pass through a narrow bony space called the Subacromial Space – under the bone on the top of your shoulder. With repetitive pinching, the tendon(s) become irritated and inflamed. This can lead to thickening of the tendon which may cause further problems because there is very little free space, so as the tendons become larger, they are impinged further by the structures of the shoulder joint and the muscles themselves.

How do I know if I've got Impingement Syndrome?

- Shoulder pain comes on gradually over a long period.
- Pain at the front and/or side of the shoulder joint with overhead activity such as throwing, front crawl swimming.
- Pain at the back and/or front of the shoulder when the arm is held out to the side (abducted) and turned outwards (external rotation)
- Pain when lifting the arm above 90 degrees.
- Pain on internal (medial rotation) movements - for example reaching up behind your back.

What Should I do about it?

- Rest – avoid the aggravating activity – you can still do lots of lower limb or core work and CV work to maintain your fitness.
- Apply ice or cold therapy to the painful area for 10-15 minutes per 2 hour period. Remember to use an ice bag or a towel wrapped around the ice to protect against ice burn.

- Seek advice from a physiotherapist who can develop an appropriate rehabilitation programme. This is important as just resting and then returning to your sport once the pain has gone will not address the underlying problem and it will just return!

What Can Physiotherapy do to help?

- Carry out a full examination including specific tests to determine what is causing the impingement.
- Treat the symptoms with manual and/or electrotherapy, taping, acupuncture and postural advice.
- Provide a programme of specific exercises to help the problem and prevent it from re-occurring.

Would you like to receive this on-line each month?

Email sara.gordon@physioandpilates.co.uk