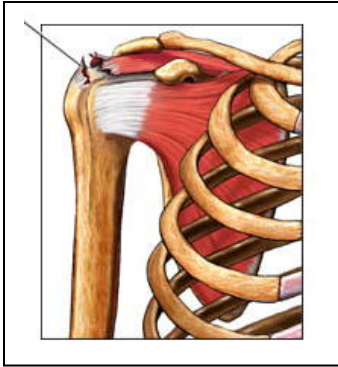


## Shoulder Injuries – Rotator Cuff Tear



The rotator cuff is comprised of four muscles: the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor, and subscapularis. These muscles are responsible for stabilizing, lifting, and rotating the humerus (upper arm) within the shoulder joint. These muscles are connected to the humerus by, what is known as, the rotator cuff tendons.

A tear of the rotator cuff is characterized by a tear of the rotator cuff tendons or a tear in one of the individual muscles that make up the rotator cuff. This can occur as a result of degeneration (chronic rotator cuff tear) or as a result of a single traumatic event (acute rotator cuff tear). The primary symptoms of a rotator cuff tear are pain, weakness, stiffness, popping/catching, and the inability to sleep on the affected side.

Rotator cuff tears, whether complete or incomplete, are most often diagnosed through the use of an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging). Using this method, a doctor is able to view a digital image of the damaged area to determine the severity of the injury.

Arthroscopy is the surgical process designed to view the inner workings of a joint. It is a minimally invasive procedure that requires a small incision into the joint into which an arthroscope (a small, lighted, fiber optic tool used for viewing the interior of a joint) is inserted. In the event of a rotator cuff tear that requires surgery to repair, a surgeon may use an arthroscope to view and repair the damaged tendons. This method is known as a mini-open repair and is the most common surgical solution. If necessary, the surgeon may also perform a decompression (removal of bone spurs) and debridement (removal of non-healthy tissues and foreign material from a wound to prevent infection and permit

healing). Other surgical methods include open repair and arthroscopic repair.

Physical therapy may be suggested for the treatment of a partial rotator cuff tear. This method of treatment is designed to minimize/alleviate pain and to prevent further damage. If the pain does not subside or the tear is more severe, surgery will be necessary to repair the damaged tissue. Following surgery, physical therapy is recommended to regain strength and range of motion.