



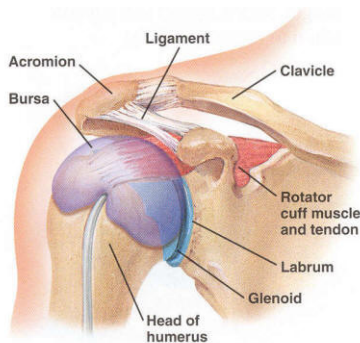
Relief from Shoulder Pain

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We don't realize how much we use our shoulders until something goes wrong. We use them for putting away dishes, lifting our kids, playing sports, trade work and so much more. The shoulder is one of the most complex joints in the body. It moves in more directions than any other joint. This tremendous mobility makes the shoulder joint vulnerable to problems. Shoulder pain is one of the most common musculo-skeletal conditions that I see in my naturopathic practice. If you have shoulder pain, it is wise to try and determine the source of the problem and take an active role in treatment so you can get back on track as quickly as possible.

Determining the source of the problem requires a detailed physical examination of the bones, joints, muscles, tendons, bursa, ligaments and nerves. I can often learn a great deal through a thorough physical exam involving structural palpation, muscle testing, orthopaedic tests and measuring motion. Diagnostic imaging (x-ray, ultrasound, MRI or CT) can be helpful but are not always available for people with mild to moderate injuries.

The most common conditions I see are rotator cuff problems. The rotator cuff is a sheath that is made up of four muscle tendons: the supraspinatus, infraspinatus, teres minor and subscapularis muscles. Tendonitis can set in, the tendons can become impinged under the top of the shoulder (acromion process of the scapula) or the tendons can be partially or fully torn. The most common tear is in the supraspinatus muscle that runs along the top / back of the shoulder, under the acromion and attaches to the top of the arm bone (humerus). When this muscle is affected, lifting the arm up to the side is very painful or impossible. Rotator cuff issues are often associated with bicep tendonitis and bursitis, although these conditions can occur alone. In bicep tendonitis, the tendon becomes inflamed or fibrotic, and commonly creates a deep, throbbing ache in the front of the shoulder. Bursitis (inflamed padding of the shoulder) can create very acute pain with raising the arm. Tears in the labrum (cartilage cuff inside the socket) can create deep joint pain and frozen shoulder.



What are the treatment options? Anti-inflammatory drugs create problems with daily use. Surgery is necessary to repair a complete rotator cuff tear, but for most other conditions the effectiveness of shoulder surgery, according to published reports, is difficult to predict at best. Exercise and stretching are important, but may not be feasible when the shoulder is too painful to move. Laser therapy is a

very effective treatment for speeding the healing of shoulder problems. Extensive research has shown that laser light therapy is safe and effective treatment for tendonitis, bursitis, arthritis and other issues that affect the shoulder. It reduces inflammation, increases circulation, speeds metabolism on a cellular level, reduces fibrosis and scar tissue, and strengthens tissue. These mechanisms result in rapid resolution of pain. Placebo controlled studies of laser therapy for even frozen shoulder have shown significant reduction in pain and disability. In my clinic I use a state of the art laser light therapy machine that utilizes pads of light that can bathe large areas of the shoulder in the therapeutic light. Then we use a high potency cold laser beam to penetrate deeper into the tissues to safely and effectively promote healing. Most of my patients with shoulder issues treated with 9-12 sessions of laser light therapy heal quickly, take less pain medication and are able to resume work and normal activities.

So take care of your hard working shoulders. With laser light therapy, stretching, and therapeutic exercise, you may be able to enjoy relief from shoulder pain.

Wondering if laser therapy is right for you? Dr. Macdonald offers a free 15 minute consultation. Contact her naturopathic medical clinic in downtown Courtenay at 897-0235. Learn more at www.getwellhere.com.