



THUNDER BASIN ORTHOPAEDICS
— AND SPORTS MEDICINE —

Rotator Cuff Repair

What is a rotator cuff tear?

The shoulder joint is a very complex joint and is the most mobile joint in the body. The shoulder joint relies on the muscles, tendons, and ligaments to hold the joint together. The rotator cuff is made up of 4 tendons that help stabilize and move the shoulder joint. Rotator cuff tears may occur from an injury, but also can occur from overuse or impingement tendonitis. Pain is a common symptom of a rotator cuff tear, but often times patients also experience decreased range of motion and weakness. Some rotator cuff tears require repair depending on the size and location of the tear.

Surgical Techniques:

The rotator cuff is repaired using an arthroscope (camera). Your surgeon will use suture anchors to repair the torn rotator cuff back to the bone.

Pre-Operative Care:

- “Pre-hab”: you may be instructed by your orthopedic provider to have an evaluation with a physical therapist prior to your surgery. The intention of pre-hab is to build up your strength and maintain normal motion. This will greatly help your recovery process after surgery.
- Medical clearance: this will be determined by your surgeon depending on your age and medical history. You may need routine blood work, tests, and/or an evaluation by your primary care provider depending on your age and medical history.
- Medications: stop taking all anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) and OTC herbal supplements/vitamins 2 weeks prior to your surgery. These medications thin your blood and make it difficult for your surgeon to perform the surgery. All other medications will be reviewed by the surgical facility.

Post-Operative Care:

- Pain medication: you will typically be given a prescription anti-inflammatory medication for your baseline pain medication. You may also be given a stronger pain medication to take for breakthrough pain that the anti-inflammatory pain medication does not control.
 - Our goal at Thunder Basin Orthopaedics is to make you comfortable, but we do not expect you to be pain free.
- Dressing: leave bandage on for 72 hours after surgery, then may remove bandage and shower as normal. No soaking of the incision for 3 weeks after surgery. Your stitches will be removed at your first post-op visit in the office.
- Ice: you may be given a cryocuff ice machine after surgery. Icing is very important to decrease swelling and pain after surgery. Leave ice on for 20 minutes at a time, and ice several times a day for the first week after surgery.
- Activity: Your shoulder will typically be immobilized in a brace after a rotator cuff repair. Your surgeon will inform you how long you will need to wear the brace. You will be required to wear the brace at all times to protect your shoulder. You can perform gentle range of motion of the elbow, wrist, and hand several times a day to avoid stiffness.
- Physical therapy: you will typically begin physical therapy within a couple of days after surgery and go to physical therapy 2-3 times/week. Your rehab process will take several months before your surgeon will clear you to return to full activity.

Please refer to our attached frequently asked questions list. If your question has not been answered, please call Thunder Basin Orthopaedics at (307) 682-6222 – Gillette or (307) 358-6200 – Douglas.

Please call us at the above number if you experience severe pain that is not relieved by your medicine or if you experience a temperature over 101 degrees F, redness/swelling in your thigh or calf.

