

8 TOP TIPS FOR

ANNOYING, PERSISTENT **SHOULDER PAIN** THAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT!

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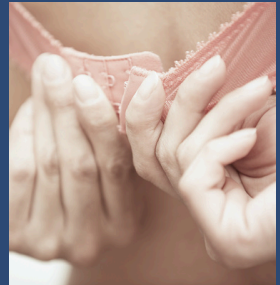
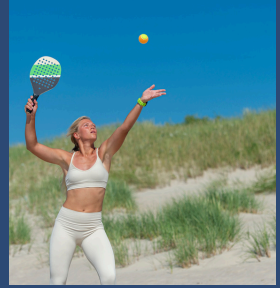


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NICE TO MEET YOU!

Hello, I'm Luke Schembri, Genuine Physio

I STARTED GENUINE PHYSIO DURING COVID WHEN PEOPLE WERE STRUGGLING TO ACCESS HEALTH CARE. INITIALLY, IT STARTED AS AN ONLINE PLATFORM TO PROVIDE FREE, EVIDENCED-BASED RESOURCES TO PEOPLE, BECAUSE FRANKLY, THERE IS A LOT OF MISINFORMATION OUT THERE. SINCE COVID GENUINE PHYSIO HAS GROWN AND THE GOAL CONTINUES TO BE GETTING POSITIVE MESSAGES ABOUT HEALTH AND INJURY TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

MORE RECENTLY, I HAVE STARTED SEEING A LIMITED NUMBER OF PRIVATE PATIENTS ONE TO ONE BASIS, BOTH IN PERSON AND ONLINE, WHILST JUGGLING AN NHS ROLE AS AN ADVANCED PHYSIOTHERAPY PRACTITIONER. THIS ADVANCED ROLE INVOLVES ASSESSING AND ORDERING SCANS FOR PEOPLE, ADMINISTERING PAIN RELIEVING INJECTIONS AND ASSESSING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF ONWARD REFERRALS, SUCH AS ORTHOPAEDICS.

AM HUGELY PASSIONATE ABOUT DELIVERING EFFICIENT, HIGH QUALITY, EVIDENCE BASED CARE, GETTING YOU BACK TO THE THINGS YOU LOVE AND ENJOY. THAT IS WHAT GENUINE PHYSIO IS ALL ABOUT.

HELP IS AT HAND!

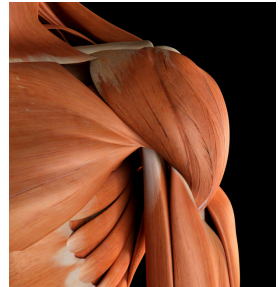
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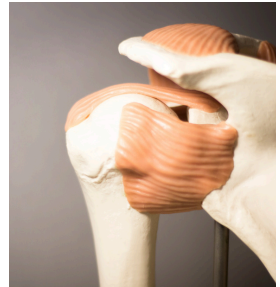
CHAPTER ONE

Shoulder Conditions

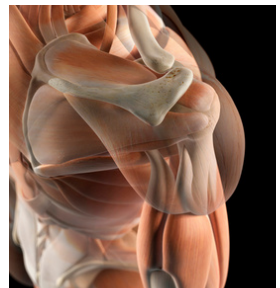
By far the most common shoulder pathology is subacromial pain / rotator cuff tendinopathy. Annoyingly, this condition has many different names, including: shoulder bursitis, shoulder impingement and rotator cuff related pain. Essentially, this condition refers to irritation / inflammation within the soft tissues. Next up is frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis), followed by osteoarthritis. These conditions can cause pain, stiffness, and loss of function, affecting daily activities.



Accurate diagnosis is crucial for effective treatment. These pathologies are clinical diagnoses, meaning they are typically diagnosed with a thorough subjective (patient history) and objective examination (physical assessment). Identifying specific symptoms, such as pain patterns, range of motion limitations, and strength deficits, allows clinicians to differentiate between conditions.



According to NICE guidelines, conservative treatment, including physiotherapy, should be the first-line approach for managing shoulder pain. This often includes exercises, manual therapy, and pain management strategies. Injections or surgery are only considered if conservative methods fail after several months, emphasising the importance of accurate early diagnosis to guide proper non-invasive treatment.



CHAPTER TWO

Activity Modification

Relative rest and activity modification are key strategies in managing shoulder pain. While rest is important, completely stopping activity can lead to stiffness and muscle weakness, prolonging recovery. Pain doesn't always mean damage—it often reflects the body's sensitivity rather than an injury worsening. Gentle movement into manageable levels of discomfort can actually aid recovery by keeping the shoulder mobile, promoting blood flow, and reducing the risk of fear of movement.

Instead of avoiding activities altogether, try adapting them. For example, reduce the intensity or duration of painful exercises but continue with modified versions.

Gradually building back strength and flexibility through controlled movement is more effective than total rest. By modifying, not eliminating, activity, you can maintain function and prevent further deconditioning, leading to a quicker and more complete recovery.



CHAPTER THREE

Medication

Pain relief can be an important part of managing shoulder pain, and it's a misconception that it simply "masks the pain." In cases where inflammation is present, such as with rotator cuff tendinopathy or bursitis, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) do more than just dull pain—they actively reduce inflammation, which in turn helps alleviate the underlying cause of discomfort.

Taking appropriate pain relief can also help you stay mobile, which is essential for recovery. Movement is key to maintaining shoulder flexibility and strength, and pain relief can make it easier to perform gentle exercises that aid healing without excessive discomfort.

Furthermore, sleep is crucial for the body's recovery process. If shoulder pain is waking you at night, it might be beneficial to use pain relief before bed. Managing pain effectively through medication can help ensure better sleep quality, allowing the body to rest and repair more effectively, speeding up the recovery process.

If you have worries or concerns regarding pain relief, are unable to take NSAIDs, or are already on a number of different medications it is always worth discussing this with your doctor first.



CHAPTER FOUR

Sleep

As touched on earlier, sleep is often disrupted by shoulder pain, which is quite common, especially when lying on the affected side. However, poor sleep for an extended period can worsen the pain cycle. Research shows that inadequate rest can increase pain sensitivity, making even mild discomfort feel more intense. Over time, sleep deprivation also affects mood, lowers productivity, and can impact mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and even depression.

Since poor sleep directly contributes to heightened pain and reduced overall well-being, it's crucial to address sleep issues early. Strategies like taking appropriate pain relief before bed, adjusting your sleeping position, and maintaining good sleep hygiene can make a significant difference. Prioritising quality sleep not only aids in pain management but also supports recovery, emotional resilience, and mental clarity, helping you stay active and engaged in your daily life despite shoulder pain.



CHAPTER FIVE

Strength Exercise

Rotator cuff strengthening exercises are crucial for managing shoulder pain, as these muscles provide stability and support for the shoulder joint. Weakness in the rotator cuff can lead to imbalances, causing more strain on other structures in the shoulder, resulting in pain or dysfunction. Strengthening these muscles helps reduce pain and prevent further injury.

Effective exercises include external rotations using resistance bands: keep your elbow at your side, rotate your arm outward, and slowly return. This targets the infraspinatus and teres minor, key rotator cuff muscles. Another beneficial exercise is shoulder abduction: using light weights, lift your arms to the side while keeping your elbows slightly bent, which engages the supraspinatus.

Performing these exercises regularly helps to build strength and improve shoulder stability. Start with low resistance and gradually increase as you progress, ensuring proper form to avoid aggravating the pain. Consistent strengthening can lead to better mobility, reduced pain, and a stronger, healthier shoulder.



CHAPTER SIX

Heat & Ice

Heat and ice are commonly used therapies for managing shoulder pain, each serving different purposes depending on the stage of pain or injury. Ice therapy is most effective for acute injuries or flare-ups, as it helps reduce inflammation and numb the area, providing pain relief. Applying ice for 15-20 minutes, several times a day, especially after activity, can decrease swelling and prevent further irritation. It's particularly beneficial for conditions like rotator cuff tendinopathy or bursitis during the inflammatory phase.

On the other hand, heat therapy is useful for chronic shoulder pain or muscle stiffness. Heat promotes blood flow to the affected area, relaxing tight muscles and improving tissue elasticity. This can help reduce pain in conditions like osteoarthritis or frozen shoulder. Applying heat for 20 minutes before stretching or exercise can ease stiffness, making movement easier and less painful.

Alternating between heat and ice, depending on the symptoms, can offer comprehensive relief by addressing both inflammation and muscle tension. Ultimately, try a bit of both and see what provides you with the most relief.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Stress

Managing stress is an important but often overlooked factor in reducing shoulder pain. Stress triggers the body's fight-or-flight response, leading to muscle tension, especially in the shoulders and neck. Over time, this tension can contribute to pain, stiffness, restricted movement and general hypersensitivity. Research shows that chronic stress not only affects muscle tightness but also increases pain sensitivity by overstimulating the nervous system.

Learning to manage stress can help break this cycle of tension and pain. Techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation can be effective in calming the nervous system and reducing muscle tension. Engaging in regular physical activity, such as walking, yoga, or Pilates, also helps to lower stress levels while promoting shoulder mobility and strength.

By addressing stress as part of your pain management plan, you not only alleviate shoulder discomfort but also improve your overall mental and physical well-being, creating a more holistic approach to long-term recovery.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Flexibility Exercise

If range is impaired then movement and flexibility exercises play a role in managing shoulder pain by improving mobility, reducing stiffness, and promoting overall joint health. When the shoulder is immobile due to pain, muscles can become tight, leading to further restriction of movement. Prolonged inactivity can also increase the risk of developing frozen shoulder. Gentle stretching and range-of-motion exercises help counteract this by keeping the joint flexible and preventing the build up of tension.

For example, the pendulum exercise is a simple yet effective movement where you bend at the waist and let the arm dangle, gently swinging it in small circles. This helps to loosen the shoulder without putting stress on the joint, when symptoms are irritable. Similarly, cross-body shoulder stretches and doorway stretches help lengthen tight muscles and improve flexibility.

These exercises not only restore range of motion but also improve circulation, which aids in healing. Movement also stimulates the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain relievers, promoting both physical and mental relief. Regular flexibility work, combined with strengthening, provides the foundation for long-term shoulder health.



CHAPTER NINE

Continue with other exercise

Engaging in general exercise, such as walking, cycling, or using a static bike, can significantly help manage shoulder pain. These activities stimulate the release of endorphins and endogenous opioids, the body's natural pain relievers, which improve mood and reduce discomfort. Additionally, moderate exercise helps release anti-inflammatory chemicals. Basically, naturally occurring ibuprofen! This reduces systemic inflammation, including in the shoulder.

Rather than avoiding the gym due to shoulder pain, consider focusing on lower limb workouts like leg presses, squats, or cycling. These exercises don't strain the shoulder and still offer valuable benefits, including enhanced circulation, which supports healing. Regular exercise can also improve sleep quality, as physical activity reduces stress and tension, promoting more restful sleep. We have already discussed the importance of this.

Moreover, staying active boosts mental health, reducing anxiety and stress, which are often linked to muscle tension and pain. By maintaining a balanced exercise routine, you support your body's healing process while managing pain effectively.



CHAPTER TEN

When To Seek Professional Help

Knowing when to seek professional help for shoulder pain is crucial for effective management and recovery. If you experience persistent pain that lasts more than a few weeks, it's important to consult a healthcare provider. Signs that warrant professional evaluation include limited range of motion, weakness in the arm, or pain that interferes with daily activities, such as sleeping or working.

Additionally, if you notice symptoms like numbness, tingling, or radiating pain down the arm, these could indicate nerve involvement and require immediate attention. A healthcare professional, such as a physiotherapist or physical therapist can conduct a thorough assessment, including a detailed history and physical examination, to diagnose the underlying issue accurately.

According to NICE guidelines, conservative treatment options should be explored first, but if pain persists despite these interventions having been complete for an adequate period of time, further options like imaging studies or specialised therapies may be necessary. Early intervention can prevent complications and facilitate a quicker recovery.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

How I Can Help?

MORE FREE STUFF

If you would still like to build up some trust between us there are plenty more free resources for you.

YouTube: There are a number of videos on 'shoulder pain' on The YouTube Channel that you are free to watch at your leisure and there will be more to come in the future. Subscribe to the channel and you won't miss them.

Fortnightly Blog: I bring out a fortnightly blog on all things over 40s health. From menopause and osteoporosis, to osteoarthritis and SHOULDER pain.

Facebook, Instagram & TikTok: You'll be able to find regular posts from with with helpful exercises, tips & advice on all things over 40s health.



One to One Appointments In Person & Online

I really hope you found this e-book helpful enough to manage your shoulder pain confidently & independently.

However, if you feel like you would benefit from a more specific, bespoke treatment plan I offer both face to face and online consultations.

Don't worry if you can't be seen face to face. Even though I'm based in Surrey, UK, I have treated people just like you, struggling with daily activities to reach their goals, despite debilitating shoulder pain. So far I've had patients in Ireland, South Africa, U.S., China & even Zanzibar and it works really well.

Whether you are worried about playing with your grandchildren, scared you could cause lasting damage or just want to get back to work, I am confident that we could work together to achieve your goals.

The ultimate aim is to give you the tools & strategies that you need to manage your shoulder pain, in a healthy way, long term.

Head over to the bookings page on the website where you can choose a time that suits you for us to work together. If you have any questions or queries then please don't hesitate to reach out.

I can't wait to meet you 😊



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