# Calcific Tendonitis

Calcific tendonitis causes a joint to become stiff and painful. It occurs when crystals of calcium become deposited within a tendon. Tendons are bands of very strong fibrous tissue that attach muscle to bone. Tendons are an important part of joints. They make the joint move and they absorb some of the stress that a joint receives during use. When calcium is deposited along the tendon, the tendon stiffens. The tendon becomes inflamed, and this can include swelling. The swelling can add to the joint becoming stiff and painful. Calcific tendonitis occurs frequently in the shoulder joint, in a structure called the rotator cuff.

## CAUSES

- Overuse of the tendon, such as may occur with repetitive motion.
- Excess stress on the tendon.
- Aging.
- Repetitive low level injury.

## SYMPTOMS

- Pain when moving the joint.
- Tenderness when pressure is applied to the tendon.
- A snapping or popping sound when the joint moves.
- Decreased motion of the joint.
- Difficulty sleeping due to pain in the joint.

## DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver might find one or more of the following on exam of your shoulder:

- If the joint with the affected tendon can still move the normal amount (range of motion).
- Tenderness when pressure is applied to the affected tendon.
- Limited strength of the limb due to pain in the joint

Imaging tests are sometimes used to diagnose calcific tendonitis, such as:

- X-rays: examines the joint, adjacent bones and will identify calcium deposits
- CT scan: uses x-rays and computers to produce a more detailed image of the joint.
- MRI scan: uses powerful magnets and radio waves to create a detailed image of the tendons and other soft tissues around the joint.

## TREATMENT

Treatment for calcific tendonitis may include:

- Taking over-the-counter medicines for pain or discomfort as directed by your caregiver.
- Applying ice packs to the joint.
- Following a special exercise regimen to keep the joint working properly.
- Attending physical therapy sessions.
- Avoiding activities that cause pain.

Treatment for more severe calcific tendonitis may require:

- Injecting steroids or pain relieving medicines into or around the joint.
- Manipulation of the joint under an anesthetic.
- Inflation of the involved joint with sterile fluid to increase the flexibility of the adjacent tendons.
- Surgery to clean out the calcium deposits and repairing tendons where necessary which will allow the joint to move normally.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Take medicine as prescribed by your caregiver.
- Follow your caregiver's recommendations regarding activity and exercise. It is important to keep moving the joint to prevent it from freezing up. It is also important not to do things that may further injure it.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF YOU:

- Notice an increase in pain.
- Develop new weakness.
- Have increased swelling.
- Notice either increased joint stiffness or a sensation of looseness in the joint.
- Notice increasing redness, swelling, or warmth around the area of the joint.

**SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU:**

- An unexplained oral temperature above 102.0° F (38.9° C) develops.

Document Released: 09/26/2009 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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