Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

Your exam shows you have symptoms of a thoracic outlet syndrome. This problem causes pain and numbness and can affect the neck, shoulder, arm, and hand. Thoracic outlet problems occur when the nerves or blood vessels that supply the affected arm may become compressed between the shoulder and chest wall. **Symptoms are often worse when the arm is in the overhead position**. Besides pain and numbness, symptoms can include a cooler hand and weakness or poor coordination in the affected hand.

Treatment can include anti-inflammatory, pain, or muscle relaxant medicines. Protect the affected side. Avoid overhead or strenuous activities and do not carry a bag or purse, or talk on the phone using the same side. Proper posture is very important. Try not to slump your shoulders forward. A physical therapy program including exercises and stretches may be very helpful. Surgery is rarely needed. **See your doctor or go to emergency right away if your arm becomes completely numb, if you have severe pain, shortness of breath, faint, difficulty moving your arm or leg**.

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