

Strains, Sprains and Dislocated Shoulders

By Vera Lawlor

Treating sports-related injuries



When a young ice hockey player came to see Dr. Kent Plummer he was complaining of severe shoulder pain. A thorough examination by the chiropractor found mild shoulder separation, along with a pinched nerve in his back that was adding to the discomfort. Plummer began a series of chiropractic adjustments.

“Thankfully, he recovered quickly - like most kids do - and he was back on the ice in a week and a half,” said Plummer, owner of Omaha Family Chiropractic, NE.

According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, about 4 million people in the U.S. seek medical care each year for shoulder sprains, strains, and dislocations. Often, these injuries are sports-related happening especially in sports that require overhead arm movement, such as baseball, softball, tennis, lacrosse, and swimming.

Among health care professionals, chiropractors are some of the most actively involved in sports-related conditioning, injury prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The Association of the NFL has officially incorporated sports chiropractors as a regular part of care, and chiropractors have been selected as attending doctors at the Olympic Games, as well as at national and world championships in track and field, cycling, volleyball, power lifting, aerobics, and triathlons

“Being a sport-related practice I see all kinds of shoulder injuries from rotator cuff injuries to torn labrums. The shoulder gets landed on, stretched, and broken,” said Dr.

Terry Weyman, founder of the Chiropractic Sports Institute and owner of practices in Westlake Village and Moorpark, CA.

When talking about injury to the shoulder you have to include the entire shoulder girdle region, Weyman said. He turns to MRIs and Cat Scans to find the root cause of the injury, and utilizes an Erchonion Laser (a low-level non-invasive laser) to determine which muscles or tissue is involved.

“Specific sports chiropractic manipulation and adjustment are vital, and a key component in restoring the biomechanics of the shoulder, neck, upper back, and hips,” Weyman said. “These treatments play a key role in healing the shoulder and restoring the range of motion necessary for an athlete to return to play.”

AGE-RELATED INJURIES

Dr. Alan Keith treats both professional and “weekend warrior” athletes at his Advanced Wellness Sports and Chiropractic Center in Lake Worth, FL.

“The most typical injury I see amongst the general public involved in sports, and over the age of 40, is subacromial impingement (rotator cuff tendonitis),” said Keith, a Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician. “Any overhead exercise – pitching, tennis, softball, sometimes certain golf moves –



break down fibrotic (hardened) tissue. Then the patient is taken to the clinic gym to do a series of light exercises. Next comes icing of the shoulder for 10 minutes and then the injured area is taped to protect it from further damage.

FREQUENCY OF VISITS

“For soft tissue injuries like those of the shoulder, I like to see patients every fourth day for the first three weeks,” Keith said. “As they start to heal the visits can be spread out over a longer

“By far the most common sports related injury we see - that does not involve the neck or back - is the shoulder.” Dr. Chuck Lane, Lane Chiropractic, Dallas, TX.

time period. Fifty percent of fixing an injury is compliance by the patient at home. They need to follow through with icing and light exercises.”

can cause this. The reason it happens has to do with muscles getting weaker as we age.”
Younger athletes suffer from more traumatic shoulder injuries as a direct result of a fall or a hit, Keith said. When treating these injuries Keith begins with the initial exam and x-ray, followed by ultrasound. Next he does soft tissue work, such as light touch muscle stretching at the top and bottom of the injury, followed by a special technique to

Sports injuries are also common at the office of Dr. Chuck Lane of Lane Chiropractic in Dallas, TX.

“Everyone knows a chiropractor treats neck and back injuries, but we stay quite busy with extremity injuries as well,” Lane said. “By far the most common sports related injury we see - that does

not involve the neck or back - is the shoulder.”

Lane approaches the body as a “biomechanical entity,” meaning that “all aspects of the human body interface and affect the other without exception.”

“Many times when someone presents with a particular injury, the area that is currently the problem is a result of another part of the body not performing properly,” Lane said. “By evaluating the whole person versus evaluating one part of the body, many times we are able to identify other areas that need treatment in conjunction with the injured area.”

As a result, Lane said, patients tend to respond more quickly to the treatments he prescribes and heal more completely with less risk of

repeat injury.

“As a general guideline, the time and frequency required to heal a sports injury can be anywhere from one to eight weeks, depending on the severity and location of the injury itself,” Lane said. “Treatment protocol also depends on the individual’s own healing ability.”

Shoulders and knees, he said, require a longer treatment time because they are two of the least stable joints in the body. In addition, they are used constantly in daily activity so the ability to rest the injured area is limited.

Chiropractic care shouldn’t end once an injury has healed, Plummer said. And, in fact, he recommends adjustments become part of a healthcare plan for individuals of all ages, not just athletes.

“When the body is functioning at its peak and balanced properly; that person will perform more efficiently,” Plummer added. “For athletes, this would also mean less strain on the nerves and muscles, and so they would be less susceptible to injury.”