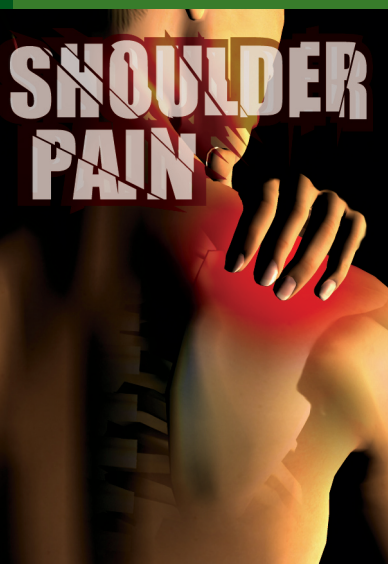


# Health & Fitness

PERSONAL MESSAGE

## the Challenge of Treating Shoulder Pain

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Shoulder problems are among the most complex disorders physical therapists treat. The shoulder itself is a complicated joint and must be examined to determine which structures are involved. An in-depth evaluation of the neck, mid-back, lower back and pelvis is also necessary to determine how these areas may be contributing to the painful shoulder. Often the painful site is not the true problem area but rather an area where the body is compensating because of dysfunction at the primary site.

Because an understanding of the symptoms is always helpful to the evaluation process, the following are some of the questions asked of patients suffering with shoulder pain: Is it a sharp pain or a dull ache? Can you put your finger on the pain or is it deep and diffuse? An accurate assessment can help to determine which structures are involved, such as fascia, muscles, or nerves.

Further investigation includes evaluating the site of the pain or discomfort. Does it occur in the front, side or top of the shoulder? Maybe the pain is primarily in the upper arm or perhaps in the shoulder blade area. Does the pain travel down the arm into the hand? (This may indicate it originates from the neck).

The next step is to determine when the pain occurs. Is it better or worse with

activity or motion? Does altering your overall posture influence the pain? How does the shoulder feel at night? Is there one specific posture or motion that brings on the most pain? Some tests will be performed in an attempt to reproduce the exact symptoms resulting in the ability to isolate the cause of the problem. Identifying the true source and treating it ensures that the problem will not return.

When all the information has been gathered, decisions can be made about the right combination of hands-on techniques, modalities, movement reduction and exercise that will alleviate the pain and allow for a return to full function. Because each patient experiences varying abilities and goals, some may want to play tennis daily while others simply want to be able to comb their hair comfortably. Whatever your goals are, we have the tools and experience to help you make them become a reality. Physical therapy offers safe pain relief without the use of medication. If you have any questions, give us a call.



Phyllis Quinn—Owner, Physical Therapy Services of Guilford

# SHOULDER PAIN

## RISK FACTORS THAT CAUSE SHOULDER PAIN AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

By Gaynor Hale, Physical Therapist



**M**any people with shoulder problems suffer needlessly because of a delay in treatment. Early symptoms of a shoulder problem that people often ignore are pain in the front or back of the shoulder, difficulty reaching into a back pocket, aching at night or a sharp twinge when raising the arm.

The shoulder is a complex joint and used all day as we go about our busy lives. Because of this it is often injured or overused. By the time an individual feels pain or experiences any loss of function the problem has progressed.

Shoulder conditions present themselves in various forms of inflammation (i.e. unnaturally hot and swollen) and are caused by irritations of one sort or another. Some common types are:

*Tendonitis* (inflammation of the tendon)

*Bursitis* (inflammation of the “bursa” or a fluid-filled sack protecting the joint)

*Arthritis* (inflammation of the joint itself)

The causes are primarily overuse, strain or injury. Painting a ceiling, playing too many tennis matches or lifting overhead too much can lead to inflammation of the rotator cuff (the main muscles of the shoulder that control the motions of that joint).

Impingement (“pinching or putting pressure on”) develops when chronic or long-term inflammation persists. This causes the tendon and other tissues to thicken

narrowing the space under the tip of the shoulder. The more inflamed the tissue becomes and the narrower the space the more pinching occurs causing significant pain especially when reaching the arm across the body. Left untreated an impingement can progress to a “Frozen Shoulder” where an individual loses some or all shoulder motion.

Chronic wear and tear or an injury can lead to breakdown of the tissue. A rotator cuff tear occurs when the tendons of the rotator cuff muscles separate from the bone. Surgery is often needed to fix this condition. Traumatic injuries can lead to shoulder instability, shoulder dislocation or shoulder separation.



Consequently, some traumatic injuries and fractures require immediate surgery. Falling on an outstretched arm, getting slammed into during a football game or being involved in a motor vehicle accident are

common causes of traumatic shoulder injuries that require immediate medical attention.

As you can see, there are a lot of different causes of shoulder pain and the treatment is determined by the cause of the problem. For this reason it is important to seek medical advice before beginning any treatment. Physical therapy is almost always recommended in the management of shoulder problems. In fact, many orthopedic surgeons now recommend to primary care practitioners that physical therapy should be tried first. The reason is that studies show rest and medication alone are not nearly as effective as when paired with

“Rest and medication alone are not nearly as effective as Physical Therapy intervention where the skilled provider identifies the faulty moving components, weak or tight muscles and restores normal function.”

physical therapy. A skilled provider is able to identify faulty movement components, tight or weak muscles, and thus restore normal function. A trial of conservative treatment such as physical therapy can also be cost effective when considering expensive testing such as an MRI; if the pain is eliminated, time and money have been saved. Even after receiving an MRI, therapy will often be suggested unless there was a serious medical issue such as a total rupture of a muscle.

Delaying treatment means more pain and suffering for the patient. Waiting to initiate therapy may lengthen the rehab process. Physical therapy offers greater pain relief without the use of medication and the possible side effects.

On the first visit the physical therapist will review the referral from the doctor and evaluate the patient from a therapeutic perspective. A physical therapist's skill and training gives him/her the ability to identify the problems and determine how to help the patient return to normal levels of comfort, motion and function. During this evaluation, all directions of movement are measured in the appropriate related joints. The muscles are also tested individually and as a whole. The therapist will look at the patient's posture, how they walk, and patterns of movement.

The first goal is to address the pain. This may be done using a variety of manual techniques or modalities such as ultrasound. A physical therapist is trained in ways to comfortably release a muscle in spasm and to make a patient feel better even on the first visit. Exercises will gradually be introduced as appropriate for the patient in order to re-educate, strengthen and improve the stability of the shoulder. If you have any questions or would like further information, call Physical Therapy Services of Guilford at 203-315-7727.

## Tips and Tricks

### EASY EXERCISES FOR HEALTHY SHOULDERS

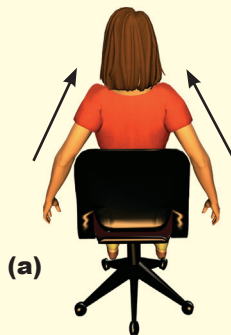
Each of these exercises can be done in sets of ten repetitions two or three times daily or as tolerated, or as directed by your Physical Therapist.



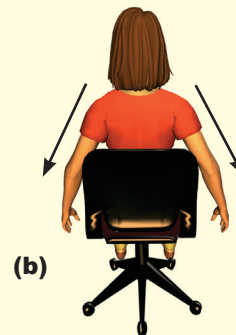
**1. (left)** Sit up with your spine very straight and tall, chin tucked in. This puts your shoulders and upper back in an ideal position.



**2. (right)** Now place your hands on each side of the seat of your chair. Keeping your elbows straight, push down lifting your butt.



(a)



(b)

**3. (left)** Shrug your shoulders up (a) and then, relaxing them, let them all the way down (b).

**4. (right)** Sitting up nice and straight, squeeze your shoulder blades together.



**5. (left)** Lying on your right side, with your left elbow at your side and your left hand across your stomach, lift your hand up toward the ceiling without taking your elbow off your side. Repeat on your other side.



**6. (left)** Standing in a doorway, forearm fully against the door jamb, lean through the doorway stretching the arm back.

**7. (right)** Facing a wall, walk your fingers up the wall until your arm is fully extended over your head. You will need to step closer to the wall as your arm goes higher.



# FAQ

## Why does my shoulder click or snap?

A tendon that is swollen can “snap” as it moves over a bone. Also there could have been some trauma to the tendon, a bone spur rubbing on the tendon or some calcium deposit in the tendon itself.

## Why is my motion restricted?

Any irritation to the joint area or to the muscles themselves will cause the muscles around that area to “guard” it by tightening and trying to prevent motion. This is a protective mechanism to prevent further irritation or injury.

## Why does it hurt to lift overhead?

Repetitive overhead work can lead to deep muscle fatigue and altered positioning of the joint. This leads to more irritation of the joint tissue. It is much harder for your muscles to control the motion in your shoulder joint when the arm is over your head because there is more

strain on it. As you lose joint control the result is more tissue irritation and pain.

## Why does my shoulder wake me up at night?

A possible cause of this is a tear in the joint tissue or irritation of a tendon in the shoulder. If you put your shoulder in certain positions it can aggravate the irritated tissue. With overhead positioning especially, there could be pinching of the tendons or tugs on the tendon or capsule.

## Why is it difficult to reach in my back pocket?

Joint irritation, pain or muscle guarding could all be a factor.

## What are the symptoms of rotator cuff problems?

Pain when you reach overhead or your arm just suddenly dropping when you lift something are the typical symptoms.

## Do you need to see a Physical Therapist for your shoulder pain? Take this simple test...

Simply place a check mark in the appropriate box. Once you are done, calculate the number of YESes and look at the results.

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have pain when you raise your arm above your head?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it hurt to reach?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have pain while sleeping at night?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it hurt to lie on your shoulder?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have pain over the outside of your shoulder in the area of the upper arm?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you unable to raise your arm?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you unable to carry objects or lift something?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have pain in the front of your shoulder?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your shoulder feel loose and unstable?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your shoulder feel stiff and tight?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you unable to reach into your back pocket?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you unable to touch the back of your neck?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you unable to reach the back of your bra?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have pain that radiates down your arm?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your arm feel achy and weak?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your shoulder hurt after working out?

## Results:

### Less than 3 Yes

You're doing fine. Exercising may help keep your shoulder in check.

### Between 3 and 6 Yes.

Physical Therapy is an option for you.

### Between 6 and 10 Yes.

We would advise you to see a doctor to get a better diagnosis. PT is definitely an option.



# Featured Physical Therapist

## Corinne Viens



Corinne Viens graduated from Quinnipiac University in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Therapy and has worked for P.T. Services of Guilford for the past 6 years as a manual therapist.

Corinne has specific interests in orthopedics, joint replacements, osteoporosis, shoulder and spinal pain. The blending of releasing restricted tissues through gentle manual techniques combined with postural strengthening is often a powerful tool to relieve pain and empower the patients to help themselves. More recently, Corinne has begun working with patients who have lymphedema, a swelling condition that often follows

radiation therapy and/or surgery from various cancer treatments. People are often unaware that there is a specific treatment for this condition. She treats her patients with a caring heart and enjoys being creative with an exercise program intended to avoid boredom. Corinne is a talented therapist and instructor who enjoys educating her patients about their condition and helping them achieve their personal goals. Her greatest satisfaction comes from seeing her patients become independent with self management for maximum health and function.

# SUCCESSSES

## What patients are saying...

After undergoing surgery on my left shoulder and having physical therapy, I was able to achieve a level of rehab that others suggested was not possible. Today, I am very pleased with my recovery and I never think about the surgery.  
—J.I.

With the assistance of my therapists and by following their direction with stretches and exercises that I do at home, I feel better than I have in a couple of years. My quality of life has dramatically improved.  
—S.S.

(After having physical therapy), I am no longer on pain medicine except for the occasional Advil. Today I am

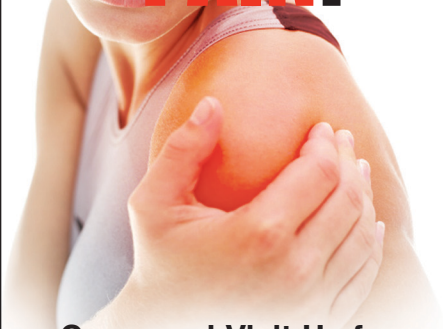
mobile, walking, riding my bicycle and in diminished pain. Was it work? Yes. Was it worth it? Yes.  
—D.T.

my left arm and found it impossible to sleep at night, even with the use of strong pain killers. After my first session at PTSOG I felt a marked improvement in my mobility and a reduction in pain. By my third session I was able to sleep through the night without painkillers of any kind and by my fifth session I had regained 80-85% mobility on my left side and had no associated pain. My therapy lasted approximately 9 sessions and I heartily recommend PTSOG to anyone with a similar condition.  
—D.Y.

I was referred to PTSOG by my family physician. I was having continued extreme pain throughout



# Tired of having SHOULDER PAIN?



Come and Visit Us for a  
**FREE CONSULTATION**

Find out if Physical Therapy can help you ease the pain and help you gain a new outlook on life.

**Branford**  
**(203) 315-7727**



Physical Therapy Services of Guilford was started by Phyllis J. Quinn in 1974 and is now owned by her daughter Phyllis L. Quinn who, along with her staff, has been providing service to the community with exceptional skill and care. Quality of care is the emphasis of the practice which is why a patient gets one-on-one treatment with a therapist.

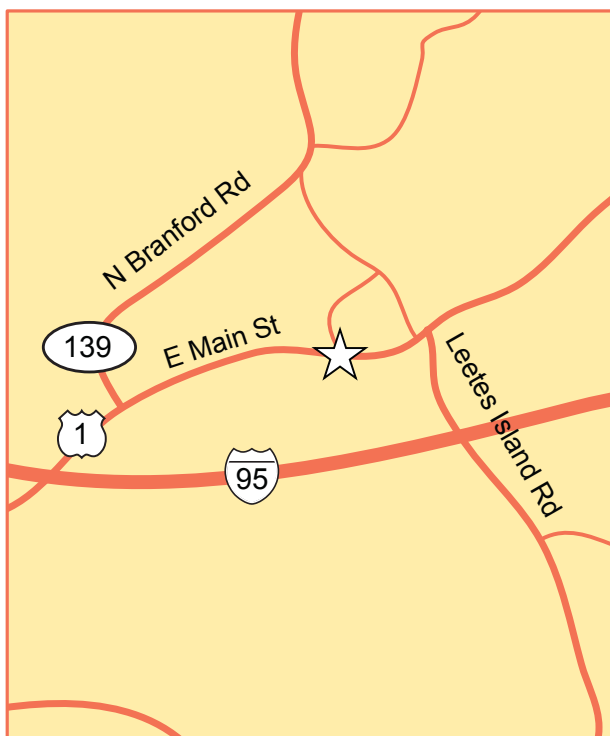
Our staff of highly trained physical therapists will tailor a program to fit your needs and bring you to your maximum rehabilitation potential. It's this kind of care that has resulted in so many doctors and patients choosing Physical Therapy Services of Guilford.



*Our trained physical therapists can help you prevent injuries, get fit, and feel great. Let us help you become healthier, more functional, and independent through the best possible treatment and education for continuing self-care.*

**WE CARE ABOUT YOU!**

Call us today for a free consultation at  
**Branford – (203) 315-7727**



## Physical Therapy Services of Guilford, LLC

The shoreline's first private practice—established in 1974

### We treat the following conditions:

- Orthopedic and Sports Injuries
- Back Pain
- Sciatica
- Neck Pain
- Headaches
- TMJ
- Dizziness
- Arthritis
- Acute and Chronic Pain/Fatigue

### We offer the following services:

- Sports Rehabilitation
- Orthotics
- Osteoporosis Exercises
- Manual Lymph Drainage
- Vestibular Rehabilitation
- Balance Training
- Incontinence Program
- Hand Therapy

### Manual Therapies Include:

- Muscle Energy
- Myofascial Release
- Craniosacral Therapy

500 East Main Street, Suite 310  
Branford, CT 06405

Between exits 55 and 56 on I95  
in the People's Bank building on Route 1