

The Shoulder

By Hannah Thompson, LMP

Weakness, joint stiffness, distorted posture, joint disarticulation, delayed relaxation, and excessive muscle response can all be symptoms of muscle abuse. The shoulder joint is one of the most often affected. The pain from routine overuse of muscles in work situations is so widespread and universal that it has earned a number of imposing labels. Some of these include, overuse syndrome, repetitive motion injury, repetitive strain injury, cumulative trauma disorder, or occupational myalgia.

Sports are another area that has a high rate of muscle abuse. Muscle abuse in sports is common enough to support a huge jump in the number of sports clinic popping up. Racquet sports, golf, cycling, running, all have a history of creating muscle abuse, and imbalance. Muscle imbalance anywhere in the system can cause restriction in the kinetic chain. The kinetic chain consists of the interconnection of the muscular system, the nervous system and the articular system.

The structure of the shoulder joint gives it the largest range of motion of any joint in the body. The drawback to this is that in gaining this extraordinary mobility you lose structural stability. Under normal conditions, stability is rarely at risk if the shoulder muscles remain strong, flexible, and healthy. With all of the new technology that we employ at work and at home the integrity of the shoulder may become compromised, leading to a long list of pains, and limitations.

Movement of the shoulder blade is just as important as a healthy ball-and -socket joint in positioning the hand and arm in a variety of actions and operation. The shoulder blade is the platform that the shoulder moves upon. To have maximum range of motion of the arm, the shoulder blade, lacking the restriction of ligaments, moves freely on the back. This freedom requires an elaborate arrangement of powerful muscles on both the front and the back of the trunk, harnessing and controlling the shoulder blade. There are twenty-four muscles that affect the function of each shoulder. Of the twenty-four muscles involved with the shoulder, seventeen attach to the shoulder blade.

Pain associated with muscle imbalance in the shoulder can be felt in the low back, mid back, upper back, neck, head and chest, as well as the arms and wrists. Getting massage to reduce muscle tension and to reduce joint restriction is a great step in reducing chronic pain associated with these conditions. A fully functioning muscle will also lead to greater strength and stability. If a muscle is tight it is in a state of restriction, the amount of muscle fibers being used is reduced. The muscles ability to use the full extension and contraction of the fibers will be an influence on the strength and power of a muscle and/or group of muscles.

