

Common Shoulder Terms Used by your Doctor

Acromioclavicular (AC) Joint: this joint connects the acromion to the clavicle and is made up of strong ligaments

Acromion: the topmost point of the scapula; supports the deltoid muscle and connects the shoulder blade to the clavicle

Acromioplasty: a procedure to cure Impingement Syndrome; in this procedure damaged tissue of the shoulder can be removed, the sub-acromial space can be increased, and the inflamed bursa can be cleared

Adhesive Capsulitis (“Frozen Shoulder”): a condition in which the capsule becomes inflamed and the joint stiffens; in this condition there is pain and a progressive loss of shoulder motion, due to adhesions (bands of tissue) that develop between tendons and ligaments, restricting bone motion

Allograft (of cartilage or ligaments): transplant of frozen cartilage or ligaments from a donor

Anesthesia: a drug that causes a patient to lose sensation or consciousness so that surgery can be performed without any pain: can be “local,” in which case only the region being operated on becomes numb, “regional,” in which everything below the waist becomes numb, or “general,” in which the patient will be put to sleep

Arthritis: a disease in which the joints become inflamed, causing pain and stiffness

Arthrogram: injection of a radioactive substance in order to take a radiograph of a joint

Arthroscopy: a minimally invasive surgery in which one looks inside a joint with a fiber-optic scope and can perform procedures

Articular cartilage: see Cartilage

Autograft (of cartilage or ligaments): transplant of cartilage or ligaments from one part of the patient’s body to another

Biceps: muscle that starts at the elbow and splits into two tendons; the shorter tendon (short head) ends at the coracoid process of the scapula; the larger tendon (long head) enters the shoulder joint



Biceps tenodesis: a surgical procedure in which the ruptured end of the biceps tendon is anchored to the upper end of the humerus

Blood clot: a mass of gelled blood cells

Bone spurs: abnormal bone projections that grow off of joints

Bursa sac: a small, fluid-filled sac made of tissue that creates surfaces for smooth motion

Calcified Tendonitis: a partial tear of the rotator cuff that is associated with calcium deposits in the substance of the tendon

Capsular Shift procedure: performed when the ligaments and capsule lining are stretched out of shape; the loose capsule is tightened at the same time as the ligaments are repaired

Cartilage: a type of connective tissue that covers joint surfaces, cushions the bones, and absorbs shock

Clavicle: the collarbone

Coracoacromial ligament: a ligament that connects the coracoid process to the acromion

Coracoid process: a part of the scapula that helps stabilize the shoulder joint

Degenerative tear: a tear that usually occurs when cartilage weakens and thins over time; becomes more prone to tear from simple motion

Dislocation: when a joint has slipped completely out of place

Distal: used to describe something that is situated away from the center of the body, such as a limb

Fracture: a cracked bone

Glenoid cavity: the shoulder socket

Glenoid labrum: the rim of tissues surrounding the glenoid cavity

“Greenstick” fracture: a fracture that occurs in the middle of children’s bones since they can bend without breaking



Growth plates: softer, developing bone in growing children; they cannot be seen in X-rays

Hill Sach's Lesion: damage to the head of the humerus

Humerus: the upper arm bone; the head of the humerus rests in the glenoid

Hyperextension: extension of a joint beyond its normal range

Hypertension: high blood pressure

Impingement Syndrome: a condition that results from overuse of the shoulder; the tendons and bursa may thicken and pinch against the bone, causing irritation and pain, and can also occur at the AC joint

Insidious: a disease develops so gradually that it is usually well established before it is diagnosed

Labrum: the cartilaginous lip that covers the edge of the glenoid cavity

Lateral: used to describe something that is located away from the center of the body

Ligament: tough tissue connecting bone to bone

Loose bodies: cartilage fragments that detach and are loose in the knee

Medial: used to describe something that is located towards the center of the body

Microfracture technique: a technique in which bone surface is drilled in order to help blood and marrow get to the surface

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): strong magnets and radio waves are used to create images of the soft tissues in the body; MRIs are clearer than X-rays

Mumford Procedure: a resection of the prominent tip of the distal clavicle

NSAIDS: Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (for example, aspirin and ibuprofen)

Osteoarthritis: a disease in which the cartilage of joints breaks down over time



Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD): when fragments of bone below a joint lose blood and separate from the rest of the bone

Periosteum: the membrane that lines the outside of all bones, except for the end of long joints

Proximal: used to describe something that is situated close to the center of the body

RICE: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation

Rotator cuff: made up of four muscles and their tendons that originate from the scapula and form a single tendon unit that inserts on the upper humerus; it helps stabilize the shoulder within the joint, lift the arm, and rotate the humerus

Scapula: the shoulder blade

Scar tissue: connective tissue forming a scar, composed mostly of fibroblasts and unorganized collagen

Sprain: the stretching or tearing of a ligament

Subluxation: a partial dislocation

Synovitis: an inflammation of the lining of a joint

Tendon: tough tissue connecting muscles to bones

Trapezius muscle: two muscles, one located on either side of the upper back; mainly used to stabilize and rotate the scapula

Tuberosity: a prominence on a bone where ligaments or tendons will attach; the humeral head has greater and lesser tuberosities: the infraspinatus and supraspinatus attach to the greater tuberosity and the subscapularis attaches to the lesser tuberosity

X-ray: electromagnetic radiation that bounces off bones to create a photograph of some part of a person's skeleton; commonly used to make diagnoses