

Avoiding the syndrome of 'swimmer's shoulder'.

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This is part two of a two -part series.

Aspects that may help the swimmer's stroke mechanics and put less stress on the rotator cuff would include not crossing midline during the entry phase or catch phase of the stroke. Furthermore, hitting the water with the hand flat instead of internally rotated or thumb down position can place less stress on the rotator cuff and shoulder. Shorter strokes instead of over reaching can also put less stress on the rotator cuff tendon. Finally, paddles that are larger in the size of the palm or hand usually are harmful to the shoulder and cause further stress and impingement on the rotator cuff musculature. By using a proper body roll and breathing techniques, breathing on both sides, one can use their body to ease shoulder recovery and put less stress on the rotator cuff musculature and less impingement.

Prevention of shoulder tendinopathy in the swimmer can be summed up in the four following categories:

- (1) Training regimen
- (2) Strengthening
- (3) Stretching
- (4) Stroke mechanics

Simple aspects of the training regimen should help the swimmer with proper emphasis on:

Training regimen

1) Warm up and warm down at every practice. One should gradually increase distance being careful not to over do it too quickly or too intensely. Proper rest should be allowed with the significant stress that is involved with swimming. Furthermore, the most rigorous sets of the swim work out should be at the beginning and not the end, to prevent injury.

Strengthening

2) Secondly, strengthening is important for the swimmer, but it is important not to have any pain involved in the strengthening process. There should be proper warm up and warm down at every practice with emphasis on dry-land training. This should include strengthening of the external rotators of the shoulder and the program should be more than three times a week. Furthermore, strengthening exercises involving the muscles surrounding the shoulder blade are very important.

Stretching

3) Thirdly, stretching should involve no pain as well. Stretching exercises need to be daily and ballistic stretches should not be allowed. If a good trainer or coach understands passive or proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitated stretching, these should also be implemented.

Stroke mechanics

4) Finally, with popular stroke mechanics in place, paying particular attention to proper use of the body roll and the previously mentioned techniques, one can prevent much stress on the fatigued and irritated rotator cuff muscular of the shoulder.

In conclusion, now that the warm weather is finally here, I hope all of you swimmers are having fun and staying fit. Should you have any shoulder problems that prevent you from enjoying swimming in your pull workouts, I hope you will contact a good athletic trainer or physical therapist, or should you need an orthopedic surgeon, investigate one who is knowledgeable in swimming mechanics in the shoulder.