

SHOULDER INJURIES

It's a typical afternoon at work and you're busy stocking shelves with merchandise. You strain as you reach overhead to place a particularly heavy item on the shelf. Suddenly a sharp, searing pain cuts through your shoulder, causing you to cry out in agony. After the initial burst of pain subsides, you find that you experience shoulder pain when you reach up to comb your hair, or when you bend your arm back to put on a jacket. It is likely that you have suffered a rotator cuff injury, a common injury among employees whose work involves lifting, pulling, or repetitive overhead arm movement.

The rotator cuff consists of the group of muscles and tendons which connect the upper arm to the shoulder. The rotator cuff holds the upper arm bone (humerus) firmly in the shoulder joint, allowing it to rotate. When the rotator cuff is torn, such rotation becomes painful and may be impeded, making many daily tasks painful or impossible. When the tear is caused by a major traumatic injury, as in the scenario outlined above, this pain is acute and may be accompanied by an immediate weakness of the arm. However, a rotator cuff may also develop tears over time as the result of long-term wear. In this case the pain may be mild at first, gradually building over time and eventually becoming noticeable even when the shoulder is not active.

If you think you may have torn your rotator cuff, you should consult a doctor. In many cases, physical examination and evaluation of your symptoms are all a doctor will require to diagnose rotator cuff injury. In cases where the injury appears to be severe, or the source of the pain is unclear, a doctor may recommend diagnostic imaging, such as an X-ray or an MRI. These additional studies may also provide objective information about the size and location of a tear, if one exists.

Once a rotator cuff injury has been diagnosed, there are a variety of treatment options available. You should discuss all the alternatives with your doctor, who will help you decide the most appropriate treatment given your injury and lifestyle. For less severe injuries, nonsurgical treatment options include simple rest, use of a sling, steroid injections, anti-inflammatory medication, and physical

therapy. For large tears or especially active patients, however, surgery will often be necessary to restore the shoulder to the level of strength required. Depending on the size and location of the tear, the incision made for surgery may be as small as a few millimeters or as large as ten centimeters; in general, the larger the incision, the longer and more painful the recovery will be.

Regardless of whether surgical or nonsurgical treatment options are chosen, rest is an essential part of recovery from a shoulder injury. Depending on the nature of your job and the severity of your injury, you may be unable to work for some time: in 2008, half of all US workers who lost time at work due to shoulder injury missed more than 20 days of work. In severe cases, you may be so disabled that you are unable to return to your previous position.

If you have suffered a shoulder injury at work, during a motor vehicle accident or as a result of a fall down, you need an attorney experienced with this type of injury to get you the compensation that you deserve. At Kessler, DiGiovanni & Jesuele, LLP, we have handled thousands of shoulder injury cases. We have the experience and medical knowledge to effectively present your case to the Court or jury.

Please contact us at 908-232-2040 for a free consultation.