

# **Biceps Tendonitis**

## **What is biceps tendonitis?**

Tendons are connective tissue bands that attach muscles to bones. The biceps muscle is located in the front part of the upper arm and attaches at the elbow and in two places at the shoulder. Biceps tendonitis, also called bicipital tendonitis, is inflammation that causes pain in the front part of the shoulder or upper arm.

## **How does it occur?**

Biceps tendonitis occurs from overuse of the arm and shoulder or from an injury to the biceps tendon.

## **What are the symptoms?**

You feel pain when you move your arm and shoulder, especially when you move your arm forward over shoulder height. You feel pain when you touch the front of your shoulder.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Your health care provider will examine your arm and shoulder for tenderness along the biceps muscle and biceps tendons.

## **How is it treated?**

Treatment may include:

- placing ice packs on your shoulder for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away
- taking anti-inflammatory medication
- getting an injection of a corticosteroid medication to reduce the inflammation and pain
- doing rehabilitation exercises.

## **When can I return to my sport or activity?**

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to your activity will be determined by how soon your shoulder recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

You may safely return to your sport or activity when:

- Your injured shoulder has full range of motion without pain.
- Your injured shoulder has regained normal strength compared to the uninjured shoulder.

In throwing sports, you must gradually rebuild your tolerance to throwing. This means you should start with gentle tossing and gradually throw harder. In contact sports, your

shoulder must not be tender to touch and contact should progress from minimal contact to harder contact.

### **How can I prevent biceps tendonitis?**

You can best prevent biceps tendonitis by doing a proper warm-up and stretching exercises for your arm and shoulder before your activity.

Written by Pierre Rouzier, M.D., for McKesson Clinical Reference Systems. Published by [McKesson Clinical Reference Systems](#).

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