



head to toe healthcare summer newsletter



It may have just hit Summer but you'd be excused for thinking that may have happened a few weeks ago. Melbourne has just recorded an average daytime temperature of 27°C for the month of November, making it the hottest November in over 150 years. But Melbourne being Melbourne, we also recorded the wettest November in over 5 years, getting drenched in more than 100mm of rain, almost double the average! I'm sure if your garden looks anything like ours the rain was a welcome arrival!

And we thought we would hold off until the second paragraph to remind you of how close Christmas is. How do we always manage to leave everything to the last minute? And nothing is a truer test of mental strength than hitting Southland or Chadstone on Christmas Eve. Head to Toe **Hampton** will be **open** until **8pm** Christmas Eve, so if you've been thinking about making an appointment, don't delay. For your convenience we will also be **open**:

Tuesday 29th December 2009

&

Wednesday 30th December 2009

Normal hours resume from **Monday 4th January 2010**

We are now down to our final month for this quarter: referral **rewards program**. You can still be in the running for some fantastic prizes simply for spreading the word about Head to Toe. Each referral you provide up until the end of December will entitle you to one complimentary entry, as will every 3 visits you attend our clinic for osteopathy, physiotherapy, massage, myotherapy & pilates.

This quarter's prizes are a selection from:

Dinner for 2, Show, 1 Night in 5 star Hotel (Melb)

Or

32inch HD LCD TV

Or

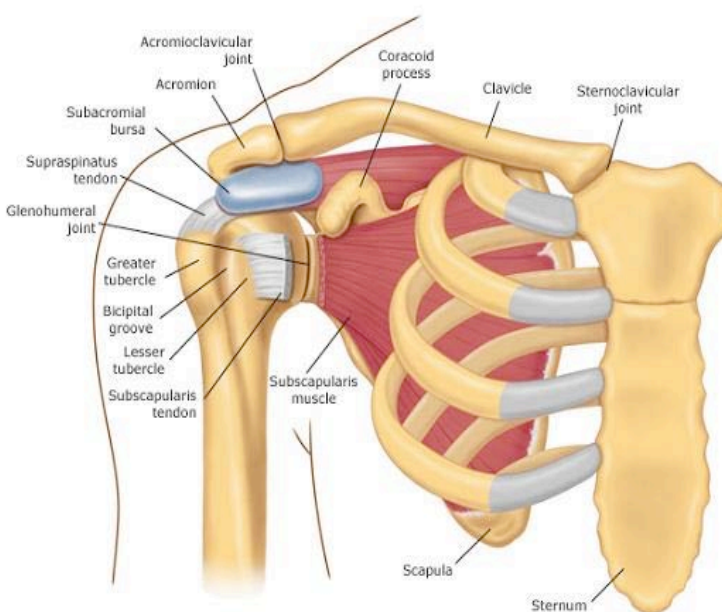
20 Personal Training Sessions

Plus 3 x iPods & 3 x 1 hour massage vouchers as runners-up prizes.

Last season we looked at stretching & warming-up and its role in exercise. This time we thought we would take a closer look at the shoulder joint and what you can do to avoid injury and what to do if you do.

Focus of the month: the Shoulder

The shoulder is a fascinating joint that provides us with an incredible range of movement. In order to achieve this it must strike a balance between being loose and mobile and strong and stable. This compromise is the very reason it is so vulnerable to injury.



It is made up of 4 joints; the one of most interest to us is the **glenohumeral joint**, or the ball and socket part. It is easiest to imagine this joint like a basketball sitting on a dinner plate. The socket part is very shallow, and the ball part is very large, and this is why the shoulder is a very easy joint to dislocate. The socket part has cartilage to help provide more support and also some ligaments, but these ligaments cannot be too tight as this would restrict movement too much. The shoulder therefore, unlike other joints, depends much more on muscles for stability. The 4 primary muscles that provide this support are known as the **Rotator Cuff**.

The Rotator Cuff is made up of the **Supraspinatus**, **Infraspinatus**, **Teres Minor** and **Subscapularis**. When we lift our arm, these muscles work in unison to keep the ball of the upper arm (humerus) in the middle of the shallow socket of the shoulder blade (scapula). You can imagine that if these muscles didn't work together, then as the arm is raised the basketball would tend to roll up the dinner plate as opposed to remaining in its centre. If the ball rolls up every time we lift our arm it starts to squash and damage the muscle and tendon above it.



head to toe healthcare summer newsletter



This repeated trauma causes an inflammatory response in the tendon and leads to a Rotator Cuff **tendonitis**, or more specifically in this case a **Supraspinatus tendonitis** (see supraspinatus tendon on the above diagram). On the diagram you will also see the **subacromial bursa** which sits just above the tendon. This is a fluid filled sac that helps lubricate the movement of the tendon in the tight confines of the upper aspect of the shoulder. This bursa also gets squashed repeatedly with the tendon and can too become inflamed, leading to **bursitis**. Both tendonitis and bursitis are very common injuries in the shoulder that lead to **impingement**. This refers to the jamming of the swollen and inflamed tendon &/or bursa beneath the bony **acromion** when you try to lift your arm. It results in much pain and restriction, but can also lead to neck pain and headaches. There are things you can do however to avoid these injuries and also better manage them if you already have one.

How to avoid shoulder injuries

1. **Avoid repetitive overhead activities:** e.g. weights in the gym & reaching up to shelves at work. This movement squashes the tendons and this can lead to inflammation. The repetition also leads to muscle fatigue which often results in poor stabilisation of the shoulder and creates the environment for more damage to occur.
2. **Strengthen your Rotator Cuff:** this can be done at home or in the gym, but requires adequate direction by a suitably qualified person. Ask your osteo, physio or trainer for advice regarding this.
3. **Warm-up:** as discussed in the last newsletter, a proper warm-up adequately prepares the body for exercise and reduces the chances of injury.
4. **Ensure your Core is Strong:** everything comes back to the core stabilising muscles. The core abdominal and lower back muscles have direct mechanical links to the upper back and shoulder girdle, so maintaining good strength and control in this area will lay the foundation for the correct function of the shoulder joint.
5. **Recognise your limitations:** don't over-do it. Your body changes over time. Just because you could do it at 18 years old doesn't mean you can do it at 80! Lifting heavy objects or performing frequent tasks, such as often the case in the garden or at the airport, is a common example of how these injuries occur. If you are new to a sport or returning from a prolonged lay-off, gradually work your way back up to fitness to avoid injury.
6. **Assess your work environment:** work is another place these injuries typically develop.

Ask us for a setup sheet for your office or seek the advice of our physio, **Harold Sternfeld**, an occupational health & safety specialist.

7. **Learn proper form:** if you're an athlete, ensure you are trained appropriately on good technique to avoid injury. In the workplace and at home there are many things that can be done to alleviate strain on the shoulder. Frequently accessed &/or heavy items should be stored below shoulder height (preferably at waist height), when lifting keep the object as close to your body as possible, use an adjustable height washing line, use a trolley to transport items rather than lifting them & use 2 hands to lift where possible. These are just a couple of simple suggestions that can ease strain.

8. **If in pain, don't ignore it:** these injuries, like most others, don't get better by ignoring them. They need specialist assessment to ensure an accurate diagnosis can be made and an appropriate intervention plan can be implemented. That often involves correction of poor shoulder mechanics through manual therapy and exercise therapy, activity/work modification and in some cases the use of anti-inflammatory medication. But remember, *you are far more likely to return to normal activity quickly if you get it addressed early.*

As with all things, **prevention is better than cure.** Shoulder injuries are typically slow healing and require patience and care. Think about what you can change at work and in the home to avoid unnecessary strain, and as always, if in doubt, please don't hesitate to call us.

Product of the Month Gift Vouchers

We all have people that are difficult to buy for at Christmas. You know, the ones that have everything. So why not **buy them a gift voucher** for a relaxing & tension relieving massage, or maybe a Pilates Introduction Pack. They are valid for 6 months and may be used for any of our available services. **To make it even easier you may purchase these over the phone and we can post them to straight to you.**

Quote for Summer 2009/2010

*"May the Peace and Joy of the **Festive Season** be with you throughout 2010 & may it be a safe & healthy year for you & your family."*

The Head to Toe Team, 2009