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## Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/10/29 08:04

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Well I am beginning to think I have a Gremlin in my shoulder. I saw my OS yesterday. My MRI showed everything is healed. He can't understand why I am in so much pain still. I have another appointment tomorrow for a second opinion. I'm hoping someone will find the cause of the pain. My PT thinks it is still inflammation. But after a cortisone shot and 6 weeks of PT (ultrasound, massage, stretching) there really isn't much change. I am trying to stay strong but it is not always easy since this has been going on for almost 3 yrs now. Thanks for listening.

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by sskylor - 2009/10/29 09:18

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Karen, See if someone can explore the shoulder thru diagnostic US.

This is fairly new, but does give a real time picture of the bone and soft tissues in the joint and can spot scarring and swelling that may not show on traditional MRI. They can also move the shoulder to see if any structures impinge during motion, something MRI cannot do. What types of activities did you attempt to resume when you finished PT and before this latest issue. In what directions is your shoulder limited or painful. You say the pain is in the anterior shoulder is this where there are any scars or incisions from the biceps tenodesis or other?

Is there specific weakness with any resisted motions or is it just with at the end ROM? Sharon

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/10/29 09:36

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Hey Sharon,

I had tried riding my mountain bike but only for about 20 minutes around the neighborhood. I realized then, my shoulder was too weak. I was using my shoulder more at work to carry computers but not that far. I was more or less just testing to see how it would do. Internal/External rotation really bothers my shoulder. Also lifting my arm in front of me or on the side of my body. Can't do much above my shoulder with my arm. Even holding the steering wheel in the car becomes uncomfortable. I still don't have full ROM in any direction. Hurts in all directions at the end of ROM while being stretched at PT.

Yes, there is a scar on the front of my shoulder where the pain is. It is the scar from the distal clavicle resection. I thought something would show up with my AC joint again because that is where the pain seems to be coming from.

Thanks,  
Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by cmm Bowl300 - 2009/10/29 20:51

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Karen,

So you had surgery 3 years ago? Is that right? Well here is my story on my 3rd rotator cuff surgery....while my second surgery on my right arm was healing I attempted to shift my youngest daughter while she was sleeping and she was startled and woke up and I felt some excruciating pain in my left arm. I knew something was wrong....3 MRI's later and 3 cortisone shots in 2 months I ended up in surgery with a 1 inch full thickness tear in my rotator cuff...All 3 MRI's showed NOTHING!! My OS went solely by my symptoms and went in with the scope to find out what was going on as really I think it's the only way to truly see and he ended up opening me up. I asked him why it showed nothing and he told me that sometimes the MRI's will not show everything. I am certainly living proof of that. I know it gets frustrating as I ended up going 9 months with that pain and got to the point where I couldn't hardly move my arm away from my body without pain. I hope this helps as I would hate to see that you might have a tear that wasn't picked up on the MRI but as you can see with me it is totally possible!

Colleen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by sskylor - 2009/10/29 21:09

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Karen, I haven't forgotten about you. I think you are absolutely on the right track with A-C joint issues. I know the MRI does not show anything, but follow your intuition here. I think you are getting a second opinion. Do not show them the MRI, but have them do all the office tests. Here are some things that should be tested and will be positive for A-C joint problems.

Cross arm stress test, Active compression test, local A-C joint tenderness and arm extension test.

I am thinking that there maybe some ligament strain or laxity that may be contributing to the whole shoulder not behaving in any motion. I also assume you do not have any pain with resistive tests with arm at side, these are a simple way to implicate specific muscles. You may get some pain with one of them but the pain will be near the AC joint.

It is really too bad that MS's have forgotten the art of testing without being swayed by an inconclusive MRI. Just tell the new OS to test you like you never had a repair this way he will not be biased. Diagnostic US will give details on the A-C joint like whether it is separated. Too bad so few use it.  
Sharon

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/10/30 10:08

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I have an answer. It only took the doctor today about 5 minutes. The diagnosis is Coracoid impingement. Since all the conservative measures are not helping, we elected for another surgery. They will clean out the inflammation and shave the bone to make more space. My shoulder was also very tight. So they might do a capsular release so I can get more Rom back. I don't have a surgery date yet but I think it will be sometime in January. The good news is if that is all they do, the recovery shouldn't be that bad.

Tennisgirl-You might want to look into this since our symptoms are the same.

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by cmm Bowl300 - 2009/10/30 19:00

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Glad you found out what is going on so now you can get it fixed!! That is good news.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/01 20:19

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Thanks Colleen, I'm not too happy about surgery #3 but I can stay in this pain either.

Sharon-Have you heard of this impingement?

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by alex - 2009/11/01 20:47

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I have spoken to my OS about this type of impingement and he indicated that at the moment there only one group in orthopaedic field reports this... there are papers about this impingement and post surgery studies on PubMed...

Still from talking to therapists they feel that it is real and see patients with pain along coracoid process which resulted from narrowing the space between humeral head coracoid process

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/h1510222uh667586/>

I hope this surgery will be an answer and will resolve your pain.

Alex.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by sskylor - 2009/11/01 21:24

Alex I think the link research is referring to C-A ligament which I don't believe is the responsible impingement structure for Karen. There are many different reasons for impingement, Type II acromium, SS tendon, biceps tendon are the most typical. In this case the impingement is between the coracoid process and the humeral head as you suggested and C-A ligament is over the acromium, to of the shoulder and would present with a painful arc.

No karen I have not seen this particular impingement but it does seem likely following shoulder procedures. The OS diagnosed you very quickly. What was the definitive test? It should be the Kennedy Hawkins with shoulder flexion, adduction and medial rotation. I would have a follow up and have him inject it with lidocaine like the following article suggests just to be certain of the diagnosis. It sure would not hurt to get a definitive further sign. You may find this article interesting. [www.jbjs.org.uk/cgi/reprint/72-B/2/314.pdf](http://www.jbjs.org.uk/cgi/reprint/72-B/2/314.pdf)

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/02 07:05

Thanks Alex and Sharon.

Sharon-Positive on both. I had a cortisone shot a couple months ago. The first hour my shoulder felt great no pain at all. Once the the numbing medicine wore off, the pain was back. The doctor I saw is in Boston and takes care of the Redsox. His assistant told me if nothing has worked so far then surgery is the last step. I have also started taking aleve but it doesn't do anything for the pain. I'm hoping once this procedure is done I can get my life back. I guess I will have no ski season again this year :(

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgrl - 2009/11/02 16:41

Karen,  
They released my coracoaromial ligament during the last surgery so would I still get pain there if the ligament is gone? I know something is not right with mine but it is next to impossible to get anyone to listen. Best of luck to you on your surgery.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by Vicki - 2009/11/02 17:03

Tennisgrl--how is the shoulder? Does the cortisone injection seem to be doing the trick?

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I have neglected this sight the past week with going back to work and not having the time I did before to see how things are with everyone.

I hope you are doing well!

Vicki

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by cmm Bowl300 - 2009/11/02 18:12

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I know what you mean about not being happy going through a third surgery!! I never thought I would of been at this point going through my 4th but.....I know it won't get better if it is not surgically fixed! I guess I am going to have to be more careful in the future but it is so hard when you get to that point a couple years after surgery and there is no pain you kinda feel like you can do anything and wham!! When is your surgery scheduled for? I am going in next monday on the 9th. I just want this over and done with so I can start to feel better one day!! Keep us updated on yours!  
colleen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/02 19:12

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Hey Colleen,

Unfortunately, I can't get into surgery until January 15th. At least I know it will be there will be an end so I can put up with this for a little while longer. Hope everything goes well for you on Monday. Hopefully it will be our last time in the OR.  
:ohmy:

tennisgirl-They are going to shave the coracoid bone and remove the inflammation. They didn't say anything about the removing the ligament. Hope you can find some answers soon.

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by cmm Bowl300 - 2009/11/02 19:28

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Karen,

I am so praying that this will be my last time in the OR!! Never in a million years thought I would be in this position! Hang in not too much longer for you! I will keep you updated after my surgery and cross your fingers everything goes well!

Colleen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by ktkewl - 2009/11/02 21:36

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hello. why do you think you had to get 3 surgeries. ?

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/03 06:19

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Wow, where do I begin....

I fell on the ice onto my outstretched arm in December 2006. I ended up tearing my labrum, tearing my rotator cuff. Had Surgery in May 2007. Repaired labrum, rotator cuff, and sad (decompression).

Did PT with therapist that pushed me through the pain even though I would hurt more after PT and sometimes be in tears. Ended up, my bicep tendon was torn and rotator cuff never healed. Also had bone spurs cleaned from AC joint. That was August 2008.

Here we are now 2009. Still experiencing terrible pain in the front of my shoulder. Had a second opinion, they have a procedure to create more space where things are inflamed. I figure it is worth a try to get rid of this pain.

Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgrl - 2009/11/03 18:20

Karen~ Did they do a bicep tenodesis last surgery? That is interesting that your repair did not heal either. Did they have an explanation? Everyday I keep hoping the pain will go away but it doesn't. I don't know that it hurt this bad before the last surgery. The doctor I saw yesterday (not an OS) said to not let the pain go and to get something done sooner rather than later because it is going to be a major problem later in life. My OS is a great guy but I never really know what he is thinking and I feel like a pain in the ass always calling but I am beyond the point of enough is enough. I swear there are times when I just want to rip it off because it is so hard to have a normal life with it hurting. I can't even put on a shirt with a sleeve yet without getting severe pain...thank god it has been in the 90s not sure what I would do if I lived somewhere cold. I can't remember...is it the same doctor doing all 3 surgeries?

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/03 19:28

Tennisgirl-Yes, I had a tendonesis the last surgery. Doc had no reason as to why it didn't heal. He said it happens in some people but they don't know why. He also told me my shoulder doesn't like the surgery. The second time he went in the tissue was red and inflamed. That was 18 months after the first surgery. I also create too much scar tissue that doesn't help things. I got a second opinion thank god. My doc that did the first two surgeries was at a loss for why I hurt so bad.

I know what you mean about the pain. I just want to cut my arm off when it gets bad. Today out of no where it just started aching. Going to hit the tramadol tonight so I can sleep. The aleve hasn't done too much but I'm going to try for a few more days.

Did you ever consider another opinion? I wasn't going to but my doc couldn't do anything else for me. So glad I did now.

Try to have a good night,  
Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgrl - 2009/11/03 20:30

Karen~ That is the same thing that happened with my first surgery. When they went in ten months later the my posterior anchor healed but the anterior one had red and inflamed tissue all around it and it did not heal. I also had synovitis. Did they do a SLAP repair with anchors your first time around? If so how many anchors and how many did not heal? Did the tendonesis heal? I am on my third doctor at the moment. The first doctor could not figure out what was wrong then sent me to a second who went in thinking debridment and I came out with two anchors and some shaving of the suprasinatus tendon. He gave up six months later and referred me to another doctor but I chose to go with a guy in another city. That OS went in thinking he was going to release the posterior capsule and do a SAD and he ended up replacing the anchor, doing the SAD, releasing multiple contractures, debriding scar tissue and doing a glenohumeral

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synovectomy and releasing the CA ligament. Last time I saw him he said I had bicep tendonitis based on the bicep pain and when he went to inject the capsule could barely get the needle in and comment wow there is a lot of scar tissue. He stopped PT and gave me voltaren gel and oral voltaren. It felt better two days after the injection and then the fourth day it started hurting bad again when I took off my coat. I really don't know what to do at this point because he doesn't want to see me until December but I know that something is not right based on what I am feeling. I have tons of pain in my armpit area and it is very tender to the touch on the anterior part of my shoulder where the anchor repair was placed. My scapula also hurts. That on top of finding out my thyroid is out of wack (which the endocrinologist thinks is from 4 surgeries in 3 years). She could not believe all the things I have going on at my age. I'm definately feeling like a freak at this point. I don't know if I should pressure the OS to do something (what I have no idea) or refer me or just wait this out and pray it gets better. Any advice? I feel like just waiting this out is taking away time in my life I could be active and be enjoying it and I don't think not doing anything in regards to PT is helping with the scar tissue issues. I try to do PT at home but I can only inflict so much pain on myself and stretch it so much.

Sorry to ramble...just feel confused and lost. I am glad they figured yours out. You must be excited (not the right word but you know what I mean) to be getting this taken care of. Best of luck to you.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/04 08:02

Wow, I had synovitis also. Looks like our shoulders react the same to this surgery. I had two anchors for the slap repair. It healed fine. It was just the rotator cuff that never healed even though anchor/sutures were intact. I had quite a bit of scar tissue removed also. I'm sure the doc will check the tendonesis and everything else when he is in there. I have stopped Pt since it wasn't helping any.

I know that feeling of being lost and confused. I didn't know what I was going to do especially when my doc said he was at a loss. I am having real pain and there had to be a reason. I really hope they can do something for you. I know what it is like to be in pain all the time. I used to be very active before all this started. I have gain weight and feel I can't work out because of the pain. I am very bummed I won't be able to ski again this year. hopefully this will be it and I can get my life back.

Take Care,  
Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgrl - 2009/11/04 21:47

Karen~ I used to ski when I lived back east but since moving to the desert haven't had much of a chance...considering it was 92 today in november (but thankgod because I can't get much on besides a tanktop still). I wouldn't exactly call it lucky, but I haven't gained weight from not being able to work out because my overactive thyroid is causing my metabolism to be really high.

Why did they do the tenodesis? Did you have bicep tendonitis that wouldn't heal? Wonder what they do if the SLAP repair doesn't heal a second time? I emailed the doctor's nurse today telling her about when I took my coat off I still have the severe bicep pain and also said I felt like there was still something wrong since it feels just like it did before surgery. She responds by saying "the doctor says to give it time and be careful when you take your coat off." with a big smiley face at the end. I appreciate that they got back to me quickly but it just reinforced the idea that they truly do not know what it is like to be in this much misery and be told to sit and wait. I don't know what the answer is but this is ruining my life. Sorry about always sounding like a complainer...

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by karenm - 2009/11/05 06:52

Don't ever feel like a complainer. What your feeling is real. I know it is not easy to live with pain...I'm right there with you. I only wish you could find an office that could get to the cause of your pain.

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The tendonesis was done because the surgeon found my bicep tendon was torn and inflamed when he went back in the second time. I believe this was from psycho therapist.

I wish I could do something for you. It is not fun living with that pain. I have been on the Aleve for almost a week now. It seems to have made my pain more tolerable now. I have only used the tramadol once this week. It could also be that I have stopped PT which I think may have aggravated it more than helped. There has to be a doc that can help you out there. The trick is to find them.

Feel Better,  
Karen

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgirl - 2009/11/05 21:59

karen,  
Thanks for your encouragement. I was suprised my OS did not do a tenodesis when he went back in and found that my anchor at the bicep attachment was unstable and had not healed. I have tramadol so I should just start taking it so I won't be miserable but I think there is something to be said when you need strong pain meds 12 weeks out of surgery you know? I debate everyday whether to go back to my primary doctor and ask for a referal to another OS but my current OS is supposed to be one of the best around and based on how I felt the first two weeks out of surgery I can't argue that. I was doing great until the PT had me do more agresive stuff and from that day on it has never felt the same. I just get frustrated because I don't feel like they truly know what I am going through and I truly don't think that this is going to heal on its own and be fine in a month based on my previous experiences with this. I really like the PT I went to but I wonder if maybe they were too aggressive too early on or something. I guess I will never know that. Thanks again for your support.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by sskylor - 2009/11/05 23:29

Tennisgirl, Here are my thoughts, you do have a good OS, that is apparent from how you felt 2-3 weeks out of the operation, but I agree the method used by your PT with the band was too much and may have pulled the anchor especially with the pop you heard and felt. Schedule another visit with your OS. Have a heart to heart, tell him you know it is not just the biceps. Tell him it is not his surgery but your shoulder. Talk with him about performing a painless diagnostic ultrasound or going back in to examine the repair if he cannot do this. Talk with him about the fact that you are a scar downer and do not heal like others and about the mishap in therapy. He is use to working with young male athletes and they do not have these failures after surgery. Remind him of the first surgery not holding and remind him about the scar tissue he felt while trying to insert the cortisone. Talk with him about doing a tenodesis or tenotomy. I would insist on having him inject you with PRP(your own blood) during any susequent operation and personally I would not have any other surgery without a CPM(continuous passive motion) machine ranging the shoulder for a few hours a day at home in leiu of PT. Finally get a huge bottle of the enzymes like Zymitol and take them everyday after surgery and use ice alot. Take a very conservative approach to any progression like lifting in therapy, but be persistent with ranging. If he wants to give you another cortisone shot kindly decline. Ask him for the post-op report and tell him you will be seeking another opinion. That is a mouthful, but honestly I believe the combination that will make going forward possible. Sharon

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by ljansen - 2009/11/06 23:09

tennisgirl and karen,

do i ever feel like i am in the same boat as you. i'm 25 and have been thru 5 shoulder surgeries in the past 6 years. 1 successful right capsular shift and followed by 4 nightmare left shoulder surgeries. Initially had SLAP/bankart/capsular shift (dislocation skiing), then another surgery to remove scar tissue and MUA (deltoid/rotator cuff scarred together), followed by SAD/bursectomy and most recently biceps tenodesis in march 09. since the first surgery in 2005 i have never regained full range of motion with the exception of external rotation and have pain at all end ranges of motion. since the

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biceps tenodesis, i get severe pain at the front of my shoulder where the biceps anchor is and have not been able to regain strength. if i even touch the anchor or put any pressure, i get severe stabbing pains. my PT thinks the anchor did not heal. i see my OS again on the 24th and he will most likely order an US of the anchor. my biggest concern tho is why i have never been able to get range back. My OS isn't sure and my PT is at a loss. we do know i produce excessive scar tissue, which i think is the issue. I have scarred somewhere outside of the view of an arthroscope that can't be seen.

i'm so sick of dealing with this, i have basically been going to PT for 7 years straight and have never been discharged. my life used to revolve around playing sports and being active and i've stopped doing it because i don't want to do any thing that will aggravate it more and have pretty much been taking tramadol for 5 years with the exception of the past couple weeks, i stopped taking it cuz i don't want to have to rely on them. it just seems like a never ending battle.

Leanne

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by diverbree - 2009/11/07 10:19

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I hope all of you can find some much needed answers soon. I cant imagine your level of frustration. Best of luck and take care

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by tennisgrl - 2009/11/08 23:21

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Sskylor- Thanks for your advice. I just don't know how to be that assertive to ask for things when I go to the doctors. I know I need to be and I say that I am going to before I go but then end up letting them do whatever to me including 5 cortison shots at this point. I may take a friend with me next time.

ljansen- Thank you for sharing your story. I too get horrible stabbing pain in the front just from touching it. I have been on some type of pain med too for what seems like years now and I hate taking medicine. Does the tramadol give you headaches? I seems to get headaches after I take one for four or so consecutive days. This weekend I pulled out the muscle relaxers they gave me after surgery and took one both friday and saturday nites and I sleep great and don't have the not in my shoulder area anymore so that has been good. Have you went to the same PT each time? I like my PT but i would be curious to see another persons approach to this. My OS did x-rays last time I was there but he said everything looked fine. They have never done an ultrasound but I know that I will not put myself through another MRI arthrogram since the last two didn't show anything when infact I had a mess going on in my shoulder. anyways, best of luck with your appointment on the 24th. Let me know what they find.

diverbree- thanks for your support. Hope your shoulder is feeling better.

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## Re:Mystery shoulder pain

Posted by ljansen - 2009/11/09 00:14

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tennisgrl,

yes, i have found that the tramadol gives me headaches if i take it too much. i try to switch back and forth between that and the muscle relaxants at nights. I have been to the same PT after every surgery with the exception of the first surgery I had on my left, which is what makes me think it was right after that surgery that something went wrong or scar tissue formed somewhere and they just haven't found it. I had a capsular shift on my right, and am back to 100%, so it makes me think had i had my same PT my left shoulder woudn't be in such a mess. My PT specializes in shoulder rehab (especially stabilizations, which i initially had), so i trust her fully, but she is at a loss right. she has even had the other PTs look at my case and no one can figure it out, why i am not able to regain ROM. regardless of procedure i am right back to where i was after that initial surgery. during that rehab, i was immobilized in the sling for 6 weeks and my PT barely had me moving, so i think that is what did it, expecially with my tendency to produce a lot of scar tissue. i am like you when I see the OS, i always forget to bring up most things i want to say. as soon as he asks me questions, all of mine are gone or i don't get the chance to ask. it's very frustrating. i've search hi and lo through medical journals to find something and the only thing i can come up with is posterior capsular contracture of some sort. we'll see what he says in

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a few weeks.

before that, i have to do a wrist arthrogram MRI next week to also deal with my broken wrist and possible torn cartilage :S

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