

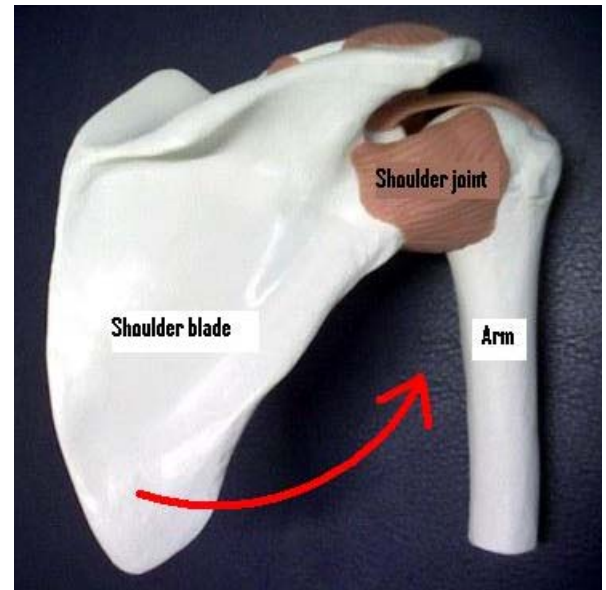
Understanding Shoulder Pain

I have shoulder pain, why are my shoulder blade and spine important?

There is more to upper limb movement than just moving your arm. Full upper limb movement requires help from your thoracic spine, shoulder blade and shoulder joint. For example, lifting your arm above your head has a total range of movement of 180°. Only 90° of this movement happens at the shoulder joint. The rest comes from the thoracic spine and the shoulder blade. If they are not performing well, the shoulder must take up the slack. The resulting overload of the shoulder can cause injury.

How does my shoulder blade help my arm move?

Let us consider your right arm viewed from the back, as in the photo to the right. Your arm bone sits in the shoulder joint, which is actually part of your shoulder blade. As you lift your arm, your shoulder blade rotates counter-clockwise. This movement gradually repositions the shoulder joint further upwards as you lift your arm, allowing increased range of arm movement.



How does my thoracic spine help my arm move?

Every time that you lift your arm, your thoracic spine straightens. This also helps to reposition the shoulder joint and allows further range of movement. Try this: first, sit up tall and lift both arms above your head. Now slouch and again lift your arms above your head. See how much easier it is when your back is straight?

Will improving my shoulder blade or thoracic spine function help my shoulder pain?

It is very common that overuse injuries of the shoulder develop when the thoracic spine or shoulder blade are not playing their role well. With improved function, the shoulder blade and thoracic spine take some of the load off the shoulder and allow the injured shoulder to recover.

What can help my thoracic spine function better?

There are several ways to improve spinal flexibility. Your physiotherapist can perform manual therapy and massage to the joints and muscles of the thoracic spine. They can also prescribe a variety of flexibility exercises for you to do at home.

What can help my shoulder blade function better?

Shoulder blade dysfunction is usually the result of two problems: 1) tightness of shoulder blade muscles that pull into the clockwise direction and 2) poor activation of shoulder blade muscles that pull in a counter-clockwise. Your physiotherapist will thoroughly assess which muscles are tight and which are not functioning well. Then they will apply and prescribe lengthening and strengthening techniques to the appropriate muscles.

For more information, please email Optima Sport Medicine on admin@optimasportsmed.com