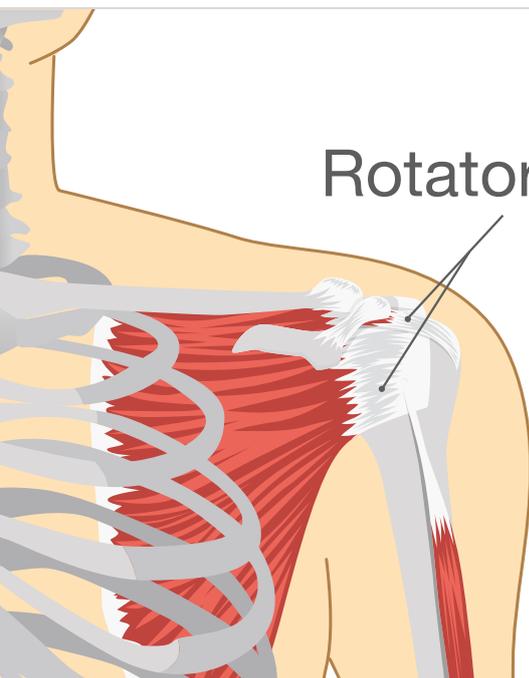


Rotator cuff injuries

Rotator cuff injuries can be caused by a sudden traumatic incident, or develop over time. Symptoms can include pain, weakness and a sense of instability or apprehension, around your shoulder.



Rotator cuff

Pain can present around the shoulder, upper arm, and shoulder blade.

The shoulder joint is a very flexible ball and socket joint, formed by three bones: the shoulder blade or scapula, the upper arm or humerus, and the collar bone or clavicle. The four rotator cuff muscles are a key part of what gives your shoulder its stability. Damage to any one of these muscles therefore impacts on the function of your joint.

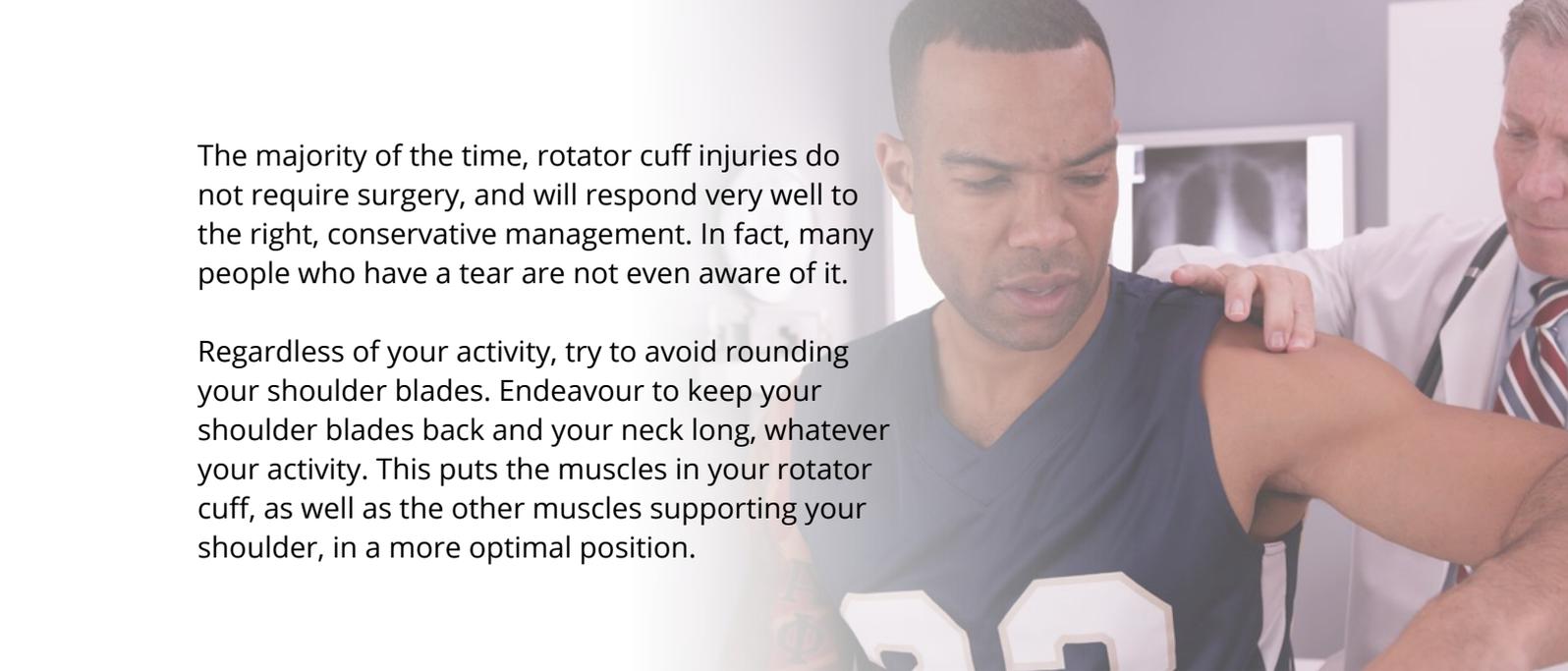
Typically, rotator cuff injuries tend to be more common with age. Poor positioning and/or repetitive use can lead to a cumulative strain placed on these muscles. As a result they can become irritated, or perhaps even tear.

A sudden injury, such as an awkward fall, can result in similar damage.

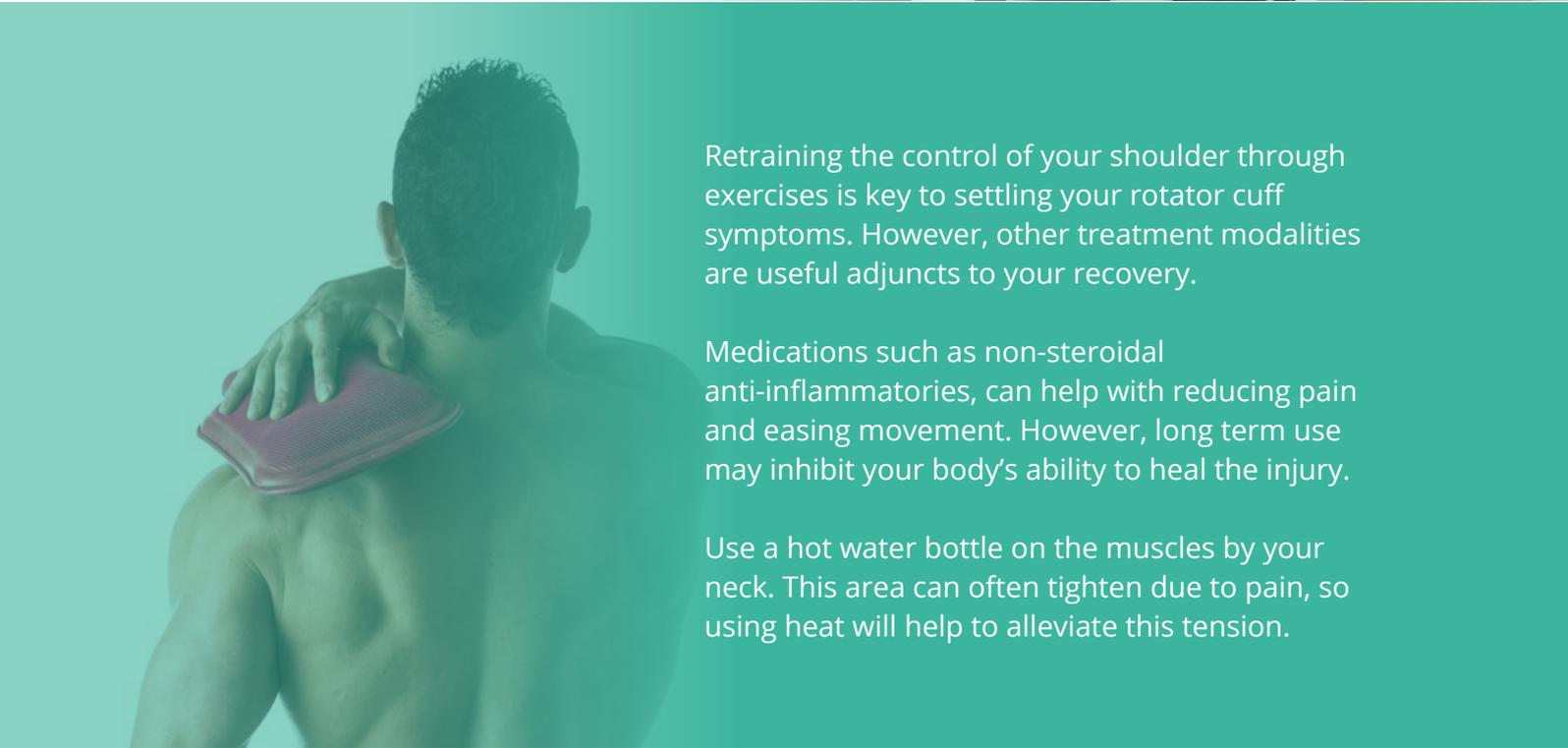


The majority of the time, rotator cuff injuries do not require surgery, and will respond very well to the right, conservative management. In fact, many people who have a tear are not even aware of it.

Regardless of your activity, try to avoid rounding your shoulder blades. Endeavour to keep your shoulder blades back and your neck long, whatever your activity. This puts the muscles in your rotator cuff, as well as the other muscles supporting your shoulder, in a more optimal position.

A photograph showing a doctor in a white coat and stethoscope examining a patient's shoulder. The patient is wearing a dark blue athletic jersey with the number 20. The doctor is pointing to the patient's shoulder with his right hand.

Retraining the control of your shoulder through exercises is key to settling your rotator cuff symptoms. However, other treatment modalities are useful adjuncts to your recovery.

A photograph of a person's back and shoulder. A hand is holding a purple hot water bottle against the person's shoulder blade area. The background is a solid teal color.

Medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, can help with reducing pain and easing movement. However, long term use may inhibit your body's ability to heal the injury.

Use a hot water bottle on the muscles by your neck. This area can often tighten due to pain, so using heat will help to alleviate this tension.

It is vital that you look at the activities that provoked your pain in the first place. Monitor your posture, review your technique, and take breaks if required to prevent irritating your symptoms further.

Stretching helps to prevent stiffness in your shoulder, without running too much risk of irritating your symptoms. Strengthening exercises should focus on your postural muscles, as well as your rotator cuff. This will correct any poor muscular coordination that contributed to the cause of your injury.

Your clinician will guide you through your exercises at a rate appropriate to your recovery.