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OVERHEAD ATHLETES

THE SHOULDER



The shoulder is our most flexible joint in the entire body giving us great range of motion but also making it vulnerable to injury; especially for the throwing athlete.

ANATOMY: The shoulder is formed by the union of three bones – the humerus, the scapula (known as the shoulder blade), and the clavicle (known as the collarbone). It consists of two joints; The glenohumeral joint and the acromioclavicular joint. For this article, our focus is on the glenohumeral joint. The glenohumeral joint is a ball and socket joint formed by the articulation of the rounded head of the humerus and the cup like depression of the scapula known as the fossa. This fossa is shallow and requires the support of muscles, cartilage, and ligaments for reinforcement.

Two main contributors to shoulder stability are the rotator cuff and the labrum. The rotator cuff is composed of four muscles originating on the scapula and inserting on the humerus. Their primary function is stability of the glenohumeral joint but also elevate and rotate the shoulder. The labrum is a ring of cartilage surrounding the fossa and extending onto the humerus. It increases stability while allowing flexibility of the joint and is also an attachment site for tendons and ligaments.

Unfortunately, the rotator cuff and labrum are at risk for the throwing or overhead athlete. Injuries to the structures are on the rise at all levels of sport: high school, college, and professional.



Research has shown limited range of motion into shoulder flexion and external rotation and strength deficits; especially in the rotator cuff, bicep, and lower trapezius muscles can contribute to an athletes risk.

Physical therapists specialize in evaluating movement dysfunction and diagnosing potential risk factors in athletes. An evaluation consists of assessing the athlete's entire body: range of motion, strength/stability, balance, body mechanics, and posture. Therapists will educate an athlete on any potential risk factors and will compose a customized exercise program to decrease risk and enhance performance.

Assess your athletes risk today. Call CORE Physical Therapy and Sports Performance to schedule a visit with one of our highly trained physical therapists. 973-542-8355

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