

# Dr. Colin Gage

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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Softball Season and Sore Shoulders

Once again the softball fields are becoming crowded with eager players as the slow-pitch season commences. Unfortunately, as the beer consumption, trash talking, and tobacco chewing gets into full swing, so do the injuries. One of the more common but often ignored injuries in baseball or softball is chronic damage to the rotator cuff. Let us assume that you are a person who has a fairly physical job. You are required to lift fairly heavily or repetitively. Generally, you do not have a problem with strength in your shoulders and arms. Instead, your problem has more to do with the weakness and inflexibility of four very small muscles around your shoulder joint. These muscles are not recruited when lifting heavy objects. Instead, they function to stabilize the "ball and socket" of the shoulder joint so that it can work efficiently. When these muscles become injured, weak, or inflexible, your shoulder joint will feel like it is grinding or pinching. It may produce sharp pains when you try to reach behind your back or over your head. Classically, a person with a rotator cuff problem will not be able to repetitively throw a softball in an overhead manner with great distance. Try this at your next practice. Does your shoulder get tired and sore? Does the distance and accuracy of your throw lessen with each throw? Does the shoulder ache at night, particularly after a game or practice? If you answer yes to any of these questions, you may have at least the early signs of a rotator cuff problem. If you leave it untreated and continue to ignore the internal muscle weakness and pinching, you may end up with a "calcific tendonitis", "frozen shoulder", or "supraspinatus tendonitis". All of these more serious complications are preventable if an accurate diagnosis is made early and rehabilitative exercises are started.

If you think you may have a rotator cuff problem, deal with it now so that you won't spend your entire ball season "riding the pine" with a debilitating shoulder injury. If you have any further questions, please feel free to call me directly at my office.