Orthopaedic Connection

Glenoid Labrum

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Best to start with a definition. The glenoid is the shallow shoulder socket that the ball of the shoulder rests in.
The labrum is a gristle like tissue structure that surrounds and attaches to the socket to make it deeper. Why do we need a labrum? The ball is larger than the socket and the gristle rim deepens the socket and stabilizes the ball in it. Also the labrum serves as the attachment site for several ligaments. Oh, Oh! Read on.

Injuries
Injuries to the gristle tissue rim attached to the bony socket can occur from acute trauma or repetitive shoulder motion.

- Falling on outstretched arm
- Direct blow to the shoulder
- Sudden stress as in lifting a heavy object
- Sudden pull or jerk
- Violent overhead reach to stop a fall
- Repetitive shoulder motion as in throwing or lifting
- At the time of a dislocated shoulder

Key Point: The labrum can tear at different places around the socket typically at the top or in front.

Symptoms
It is difficult to diagnose a tear in the shoulder glenoid labrum, because the symptoms are very similar to other shoulder injuries.

- Pain, usually with overhead activities
- Catching, popping, “locking”, grinding
- Pain at night
- Pain with daily activities
- Shoulder feels unstable
- Decreased range of motion
- Loss of strength

Diagnosis
It can be difficult to diagnose a labral tear. You have to ask a lot of questions about how the problem started (history). That is very important.
The neck, shoulder and arm to the hand need to be examined well. If you haven’t had plain x-rays of the shoulder already, x-rays will be taken in the office.

By now we will have a pretty good idea of why you came to see me. A differential diagnosis as it is called, will be formed in other words a list. Occasionally you may need some laboratory tests as well.
If the plain x-rays are normal that is a good way to rule out most arthritis problems in the shoulder.
Further Diagnostic Help

This was left to last because it always should be. MRI or CT should never be used as a screening tool. They should never be done first until all the other things that have been mentioned are done.

Because the rim of the shoulder socket (labrum) is soft tissue, plain x-rays do not show damage to it. If a glenoid labrum tear is suspected an MRI with contrast medium will be ordered or if the patient can’t have MRI due to a pacemaker, etc. a CT study will be ordered also with contrast.

Since we are out of space we will need to complete our discussion of Glenoid Labrum next week so please come back for the conclusion.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

I hope what you have read has raised questions. No problem!
Please log onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It has a huge amount of musculoskeletal information in the Website and the Archive of all previous GCH articles.
Check it out and be amazed what you can learn.
Good health. Good life. All the best to you. Be well.
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