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Rotator Cuff Tear

Overview
The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that collectively holds the "ball" of your upper arm bone in the "socket" of your shoulder joint. The rotator cuff stabilizes your arm and allows shoulder movement. Rotator cuff tears are painful injuries resulting from too much physical stress at the shoulder joint.

Causes
A rotator cuff tear can happen because of an injury that forces your arm into an unnatural position, such as when falling on outstretched arms or in some car crashes. Heavy lifting can also tear your rotator cuff, as can repetitive shoulder motions that happen over a longer period of time. Lastly, normal wear and tear of an aging shoulder can also cause this type of injury.
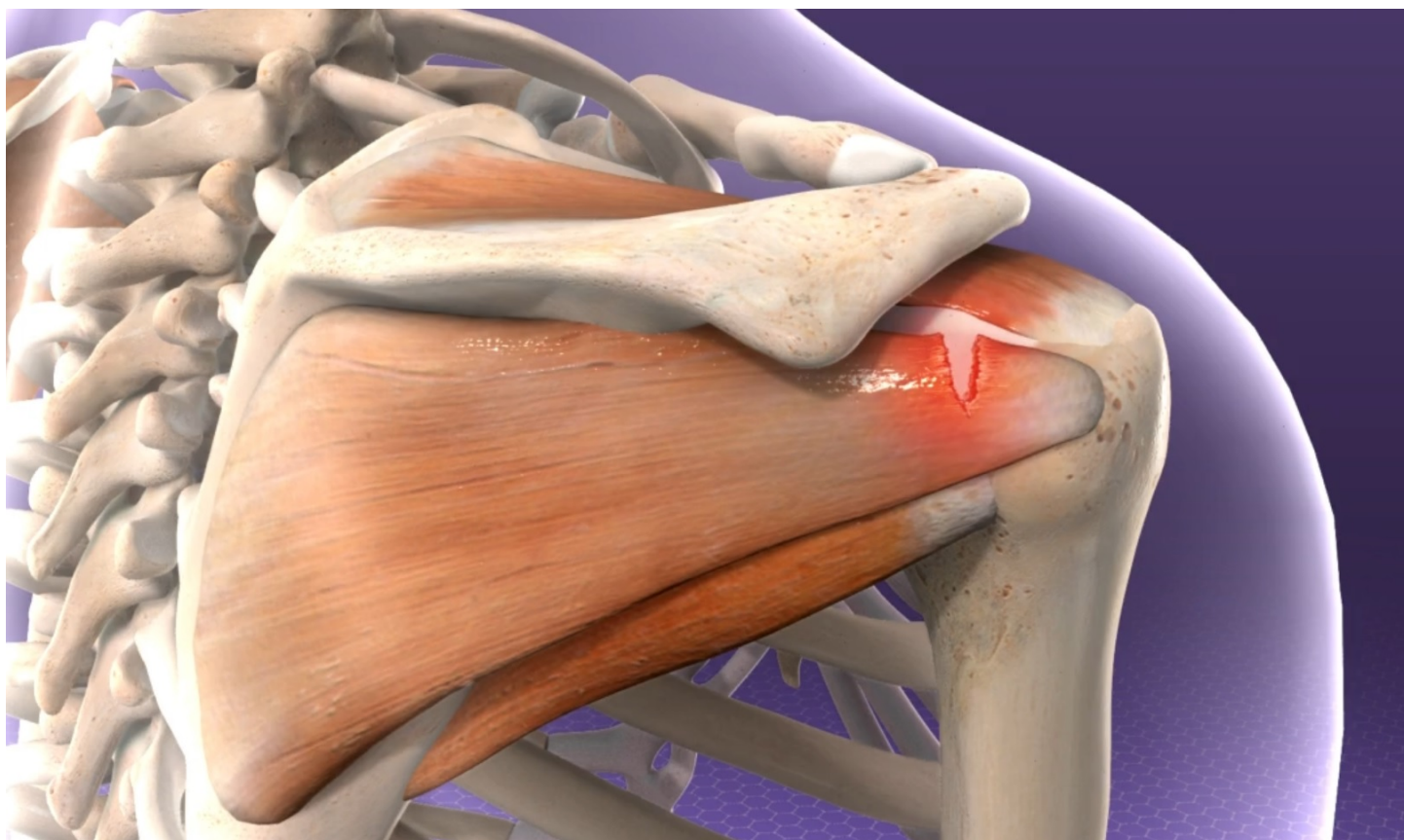
Symptoms
Rotator cuff tears are painful and may also cause you to feel weakness or a crackling sensation (and sound) when using the injured shoulder.

Treatment
Your treatments options vary depending on the severity of the tear. Minor rotator cuff tears can be treated with pain medications and a sling to immobilize the joint. More substantial rotator cuff tears may require surgery. Either way, you will likely need physical therapy to regain shoulder strength and range of motion.