



PROfiles: Rotator Cuff Problems and ART

Do you feel it? That "catch" in the shoulder when you move it a certain way? Does it just "give out" or go weak? Does it hurt after or while you are doing things? If you have had enough suffering then read on.

If it has bothered you enough to go to the doctor, did your visit go something like this? "What's the problem?" "My shoulder hurts when I..." "Oh it's your rotator cuff!" Then the doctor gave you medication and possibly a prescription for physical therapy. Both may have helped a little, but you still can't do the things you want to do and you haven't really fixed the problem.

You might go back to the doctor for the next level of care, which might be a Cortisone shot or an MRI to see if you have a tear in the Rotator Cuff. Most commonly the MRI shows no problem, so you are given a diagnosis of Tendinitis, or Bursitis, or Arthritis. It is possible that the MRI may show something they would call a "partial tear". Remember, if you have a tear, you will know it! If you just have generalized pain or a point where it hurts it is probably not a tear. Treatment options at this point are more drugs and possibly surgery to "scope it" or fix a tear that is probably not there. Understand that tears do happen, but again, you will know it. So you have been around the block trying to find an answer. You kind of know you don't have anything really serious, but it still hurts. You continue to suffer, and you are suffering now!

Rich Lansky, a nationally known strength and conditioning coach in Sarasota, was told he would have to have the shoulder "scoped." "I used to bench Press 315 lbs, then I developed a problem with my shoulder, I couldn't even bench press the bar!" "I rejected the idea of surgery, and decided to just live with it." I lived with it for a year, until I was introduced to Active Release Techniques. To my good fortune, one of the most experienced ART providers in Florida practiced in Sarasota! Dr. Prokopiak treated me 7 times in 5 weeks. At the end of treatment I could lift over 300lbs again—and it had been a year since I lifted that much—ART worked like a miracle!

Norb D., a local business owner and avid tennis player was having trouble with his serve. "My problem was a little different. It hurt to raise my arm over my head, and I couldn't get any power out of my serve." It took only 6 visits in 3 weeks. "Not only did my pain go away and strength return, but I had greater range of motion too." "I wasn't sure about ART at first. When Dr. PRO put his thumb deep into my armpit and told me to raise my arm over my head, it hurt! But in a good way. He explained that as the scar tissue was breaking up it would be uncomfortable. He was right! I have continued treatments for my other shoulder, back and legs. I feel better than I have in years."

Rick C., a construction supervisor from Port Charlotte, had a "clicking" shoulder for 10 years. "I still can't believe it was fixed in just one treatment! ART is very impressive."

Orlando personal trainer Shannon Scott has trained a wide variety of people, including four Miss Galaxy Champions. "I study all the leading edge performance enhancing techniques and when I read about ART, I knew it was what I needed. I was having trouble doing front dumbbell raises. It hurt to lift 5lbs! Six months ago I could do 35lbs. After my first treatment, Dr. PRO told me to try it out. I could lift 25lbs pain free! "I told him that every one of my clients could use this."

Rotator Cuff Syndrome is probably the most often diagnosed problem in athletes, next to Tendinitis. What is it that goes wrong to cause the problem in the first place? Just naming the problem doesn't fix it. The



trouble is that there are 14 different muscles in the area of the shoulder that refer pain to the front and or outer shoulder area. How do you know which of the 14 muscles is the one causing the referral? Then which part of that muscle is causing the problem? These are tough questions to answer if you are not looking in the right places.

"The peel of the Banana!" That is what one client said after an ART treatment. He said that most therapies go after the joint or ligament problem that resulted from faulty muscle function and never really address the muscle function problem. He was absolutely correct. The problem in the muscles keeps the joint from moving correctly and thus prevents proper healing of the area.

The "Rotator Cuff" is the place in the shoulder where four muscles called the SITS's muscles (Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Teres Minor and Subscapularis) change from muscle tissue to tendons and then attach to the upper arm.

Improperly functioning muscles affect the tendons by placing more stress or load on them often leading to Tendonitis.

If your pain or weakness is reproducible in the same motion and location, you may have a tear. Tears and Partial tears do occur in these tissues and often require surgery to correct them. However, to achieve a full recovery, the original problem in the muscles should still be addressed. After all the "peel" was never treated!

Recognizing a problem with the tendon is only the beginning. If you stop there, you will never get to *the cause of the problem* and it will never get corrected no matter how many drugs you take or how much physical therapy or stretching exercises you do.

Another problem in treating the shoulder involves arriving at the proper diagnosis. Many clients have told me that they have "Biceps Tendonitis" or "Bursitis". A 20-year-old athlete was told he had "arthritis", though his x-rays showed nothing. These are often cases of too much "banana" and not enough "peel", combined with an inadequate knowledge of the anatomy and function of soft tissues. Weight lifters often get pain over the Biceps Tendon because the Pectoralis Major crosses over it. The function of the Pectoralis Major is the culprit not the Biceps.

The key to correcting shoulder function and to fixing the Rotator Cuff is to properly detect and restore the appropriate relative motion of the 14 muscle groups that control the shoulder. 28 if both shoulders are not working well! What happens most commonly is that these muscles get "stuck to one another". No wonder it never got better!

In ART terms, there is scar tissue or an adhesions present that affects the ability of the muscle to move, lengthen and contract properly. If a nerve or a blood vessel is trapped in or between these abnormal tissues, then you may experience symptoms like numbness, tingling, weakness or pain. For example, when you move you arm to a certain point and the tension in the scar tissue gets too much, you start to feel these sensations. In a way, muscle tension works like a circuit breaker to protect the joint. When the strain on the muscle is too great it "trips" and the muscle goes weak, you feel pain and can't move your shoulder and arm properly.

The "cure" is to know where to go to find these adhesions and how to fix them. That is the ART of Active Release Techniques. It's no miracle just good science and physiology.



Larry P. had a condition known as "Frozen Shoulder". "I couldn't lift my arm from my side for 18 months. After several ART treatments over six weeks, I had 90% range of motion. ART helped where nothing else did.

Active Release Techniques is a non-invasive healing procedure that locates and breaks down scar tissue and adhesions that cause soft tissue injuries. It is a hands-on manipulation that targets very specific problem areas and heals through a combination of pressure, tension and motion.

ART is not chiropractic care, though it is often administered by a chiropractor accredited in ART. It is neither massage or physical therapy, which both relieve muscle and motion dysfunction but do not necessarily address the underlying problems caused by scar tissue formation.

Only specially trained and accredited practitioners may perform Active Release Techniques. Dr. John Prokopiak, D.C., is one of only a few ART accredited providers in Florida and the most experienced one in Central and Western Florida. Every provider must demonstrate advanced knowledge of anatomy, neurology and muscle physiology to take part in an intensive training course then score above 95% on both a written and practical exam. The results for the patient are well worth it.

Dr. PRO is a Full Body ART provider. He has specialized training in biomechanics in addition to the basic ART training, earning the "ART DOC" certification. He has treated many athletes including NHL, MLB, NFL and PGA tour players. ART works on almost all muscles. It is worth noting that "Hip joints" are also like "rotator cuffs" and respond well to ART. If you or someone you know is also having Hip problems, correcting the muscle function may help solve the problem before a hip replacement is needed.