



PATIENT NOTES – CALCIFIC TENDONITIS

In this condition, deposits of calcium form in the tendons and muscles of the shoulder (called the Rotator Cuff). This is a common condition occurring in about 3% of the population. The highest incidence is in people between 30 and 40 years of age. It occurs in both shoulders in about 15% of people.

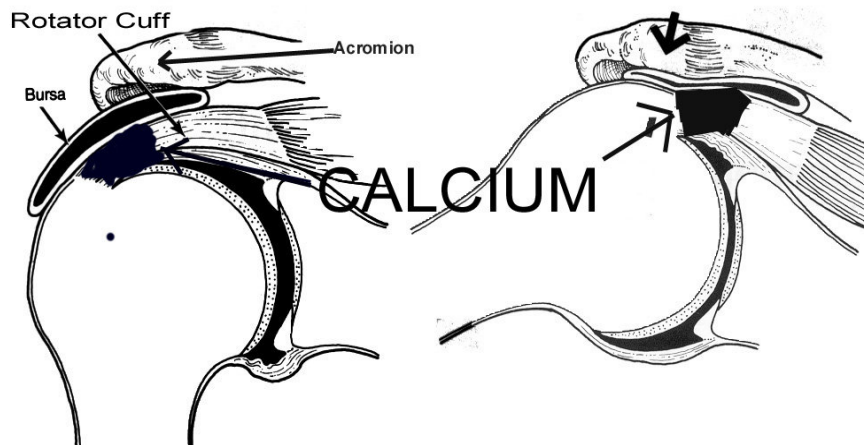
The cause of this condition is UNKNOWN. The calcium formed does not relate to dietary intake of calcium but may be associated with a traumatic event.

In over 90% of cases, the deposits disappear spontaneously over a long period of time.

Symptoms vary in severity. The condition is completely painless in most people but some people occasionally get shoulder pain with movement and occasionally night pain. Symptoms from this condition generally settle with little, if any, treatment.

A small percentage of people get acute, severe and unremitting pain. Fortunately when these symptoms occur, it usually means that the calcium is in the dissolving phase. The severe pain rarely lasts more than 72 hours. Patients with these symptoms require immobilisation of the shoulder in a sling, regular pain killers or anti-inflammatory tablets, ice over the tender area and occasionally injections of cortisone. Surgery is rarely required.

If you have these symptoms I advise you to be patient because after the severe symptoms settle the residual mild symptoms rarely last more than 3 to 6 weeks.



Some patients develop what is known as IMPINGEMENT of the shoulder. This is where the calcium is pinched between the ball of the shoulder and the acromion bone when the patient elevates the arm.

Non operative measures alleviate most symptoms. This includes local anaesthetic and cortisone injections, anti-inflammatory tablets and occasionally physiotherapy (when the shoulder is stiff).

Please be patient with this condition because in most cases the calcium resorbs (goes away) by itself.

If the calcium does not absorb spontaneously (which is very rare) the calcium can be removed using keyhole (arthroscopic) surgery. Some calcium is almost always left behind because total removal can cause permanent damage to the rotator cuff. The acromion bone is trimmed to create more space for the tendon.

It takes about 6 months to recover from the surgery and there is a small risk of the calcium coming back.

REMEMBER

- Calcium usually disappears spontaneously with time
- Complete resolution of symptoms can take 12 to 18 months
- The acute phase can be very painful but rarely lasts more than 72 hours and is treatable
- If symptoms are severe or resolution slow, then arthroscopic surgery can help

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