

Biceps Tendon Rupture

What is a Rupture of the Biceps Tendon?

Tendons are bands of tough, fibrous tissue connecting a muscle and a bone. The biceps tendon connects the biceps muscle to the shoulder blade (scapula) and the radius bone in the lower arm. The shoulder blade is the large, flat, triangular bone that forms the back part of the shoulder. They are covered by muscles on both surfaces, which attach to the ribs and spine and then to the muscles of the arm.

The biceps muscle bends the arm at the elbow and rotates the forearm so the palm of the hand faces upward. Two tendons from this muscle extend and attach to the scapula while at the lower end, another tendon attaches to the radius bone of the lower arm.

Ruptures of the biceps tendon commonly occur in the tendons that connect the bicep to the shoulder blade. They do rupture in the lower arm area, but this is rare.

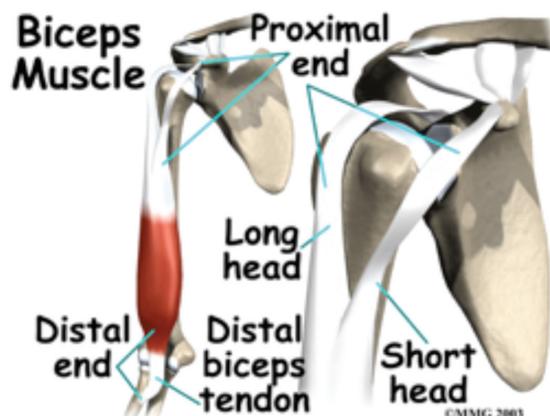
Causes of a Ruptured Biceps Tendon

The biceps tendon may rupture as a result of chronic tendonitis in the biceps tendon. Most often, these ruptures occur in patients older than 40 who have a long history of shoulder problems, such as impingement syndrome or rotator cuff injuries. In these conditions, over time the biceps tendon becomes worn and torn, ultimately rupturing.

In younger patients, the biceps tendon is sometimes ruptured during heavy weight-lifting.

Symptoms of a Ruptured Biceps Tendon

A sharp snap may be felt by the patient, followed by pain and weakness of the arm. A bulge in the arm is then normally visible where the bicep muscle has detached from the shoulder blade and retracted towards the lower arm. There may also be some loss of elbow flexion power.



Treatment of a Ruptured Biceps Tendon

Conservative treatment, which includes a rehab program of range of motion exercises, is usually all that is needed to treat a ruptured biceps tendon.

There usually will be mild, permanent deformity in the biceps muscle, but most patients regain total range of motion and nearly full elbow flexion strength. Day to day function is usually not impaired. However, some people may experience mild weakness and/or cramping.

In patients younger than 40 who may have work that require heavy lifting, surgery to tenodesis or repair the tendon may be recommended. Dr. Gudeman may recommend surgery to repair the ruptured biceps tendon for those patients who are older than 40 and who have suffered long-term shoulder pain.

Informative Websites

www.orthoinfo.org

www.sportsmed.org

www.aana.org

Helping you achieve the optimal activity level
for your lifestyle is my first priority.

- Scott Gudeman, MD



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