

Rotator Cuff: Five Signs, One Plan

The five signs that point at the cuff, what gets checked at the appointment, and the lifting rule that protects it.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic & Harvard Health · sources below

See your care team right away if you have immediate weakness in your arm after an injury (Mayo Clinic). A sudden tear from a single incident may need surgery, and the timing of that decision matters. Some rotator cuff injuries cause no pain at all, so weakness counts as much as pain.

✓ Do This

Track The Night Pain A Week

- Which nights it wakes you
- Take the notes in
- Which positions make it worse

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic lists it.

Test The Two Reach Movements

- Combing your hair
- Note pain and weakness
- Reaching behind your back

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic names both.

Ask For The Right Imaging

- X-ray for spurs, arthritis
- The exam comes first
- MRI or ultrasound for tears

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic on tests.

Start Physical Therapy Early

- Stretch and strengthen
- Give it months, not weeks
- Often all that is needed

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic says so.

Lift With The Load Close In

- Hug it to your body
- Stand up straight
- Use your legs for power

COACH'S TIP Harvard Health on lifting.

Stretch Before Overhead Work

- Two minutes marching first
- Warm the shoulder up
- Then a wall stretch

COACH'S TIP Harvard Health routine.

✗ Do Not

Do Not Lift Above Your Head

- Keep loads at or below waist
- Ask for help instead
- Overhead plus heavy tears it

COACH'S TIP Harvard Health warns.

Do Not Read No Pain As No Tear

- Some tears never hurt
- People carry tears unaware
- Weakness is the other clue

COACH'S TIP Mayo and Cleveland Clinic.

Do Not Rush Into Surgery

- 8 of 10 partial tears improve
- It can take up to a year
- Nonsurgical treatment first

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic figure.

Do Not Ignore Sudden Weakness

- Get seen the same day
- Timing changes the options
- Single injury tears differ

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic says right away.

Do Not Expect A Fast Recovery

- Sling four to six weeks
- Full recovery 12 to 18
- Function at four to six months

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic timeline.

Do Not Keep Smoking

- It is on the risk list
- So is being 40 or older
- So is poor posture

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic risk list.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing

8 of 10 Partial tears that improve

4 to 6 mo To regain function after surgery

Over 50 When tears are most common