Innovations in Shoulder Pain Treatment

When Frank Toye, 68, of St. Joseph, married his wife Joan in 2003, he had been living with shoulder pain for 30 years. Most shoulder injuries result from a combination of overuse, degeneration and injury. The injuries can create tears in the rotator cuff tendons that tend to worsen over time. The damage those years of wear and tear had done to Toye's shoulder made him a candidate for arthroscopic shoulder surgery.

Having had arthroscopic shoulder surgery herself just a few years prior, Toye's wife introduced him to her orthopedic surgeon, Daniel Sohn, M.D., of Southwestern Michigan Center for Orthopaedics in St. Joseph.

Traditional surgical treatment for shoulder pain or rotator cuff tears require large incisions and possibly a hospital stay. Dr. Sohn uses two types of minimally invasive procedures to treat problems inside the joint. The mini-rotator cuff reconstruction combines the proven techniques of traditional surgery with the advantages of arthroscopy. The other technique is a purely arthroscopic reconstruction that is used to treat injuries that are amenable to arthroscopic repair. With arthroscopic surgery, Dr. Sohn creates small incisions and inserts a camera that allows him to visualize the joint and surrounding tendons and cartilage. The images of the joint are magnified onto a video monitor, and the surgeon uses small instruments to repair the tears in the muscle. Dr. Sohn uses a technique called a “double row repair,” which is currently the most modern method of arthroscopic rotator cuff reconstruction.

“The main goal of rotator cuff repair surgery is to preserve the natural function of the shoulder,” says Dr. Sohn. “Arthroscopy allows for better visibility of the joint, and the small incisions minimize the trauma to the tissues surrounding the shoulder.”

“Thanks to this surgery, both Joan and I are pain-free, getting back to our active lives and enjoying the things that we like the most,” says Toye. “I just wish I would have done it sooner.”

RICE: FIRST AID FOR SPRAINS AND STRAINS

No matter what the sport, some of the most common injuries are sprains, strains or bruises. As the warmer weather approaches, it’s important to know what to do in the event of a sports-related injury. The best treatment is easy to remember: RICE. Take these steps as soon as possible:

Rest: Do not exercise the injured area or perform any movement that causes pain.

Ice: Apply a bag filled with crushed ice three to four times a day for no longer than 20 minutes.

Compression: Wrap an elastic bandage snugly around the injured area.

Elevation: Raise the injured limb higher than the heart and keep it elevated until the pain diminishes.

If you experience an obvious fracture, a dislocated joint, unrelieved swelling or severe, continuing pain, contact your doctor immediately.

For information on orthopedic surgeons in your area, log on to www.lakelandhealth.org and visit the physician search section or call (269) 428-3500 for surgeons in the St. Joseph area and (269) 684-3028 in Niles.