### Shoulder Pain Referral Guideline

These clinical practice guidelines describe generally recommended evidence-based interventions for the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of specific diseases or conditions. The guidelines are: (i) not considered to be entirely inclusive or exclusive of all methods of reasonable care that can obtain or produce the same results, and are not a statement of the standard of medical care; (ii) based on information available at the time and may not reflect the most current evidenced-based literature available at subsequent times; and (iii) not intended to substitute for the independent professional judgment of the responsible clinician(s). No set of guidelines can address the individual variation among patients or their unique needs, nor the combination of resources available to a particular community, provider or healthcare professional. Deviations from clinical practice guidelines thus may be appropriate based upon the specific patient circumstances.

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**SYMPTOMS AND LABS**

**HIGH RISK**
- Severe pain
- Weakness or severe decrease in strength and/or motion
- Unable to lift arm overhead
- Radiating pain down the arm, past the elbow
- Instability or dislocation of the shoulder joint
- Evidence of joint effusion

**MODERATE RISK**
- Moderate pain
- Decreased of strength and motion
- Possible radiating pain down the arm
- Moderate clicking, popping, catching or locking
- Increased pain at night

**LOW RISK**
- Mild pain
- Increased pain with overhead activity
- Minimal clicking, popping, catching or locking
- No instability or giving way of the shoulder
- No weakness of loss of motion

**SUGGESTED PREVISIT WORKUP**

**HIGH RISK**
- Schedule urgent appointment with sports medicine

**MODERATE RISK**
- Consider radiographs
- Schedule routine appointment with sports medicine

**LOW RISK**
- Ibuprofen and/or acetaminophen as needed
- Ice, heat or other modalities to address pain
- Therapeutic exercise
- Activity modification, decrease overhead activity or cross body movement

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**CLINICAL PEARLS**

- Shoulder pain can be caused by a number of different pain generators
- Pain at night as well as pain in the upper arm is usually indicative of rotator cuff pathology
- Shoulder pain should not cause radiating pain below the level of the elbow
- Severe loss of motion, weakness or instability should be evaluated by a physician