

SLAP Tear (Superior Labrum Anterior to Posterior)

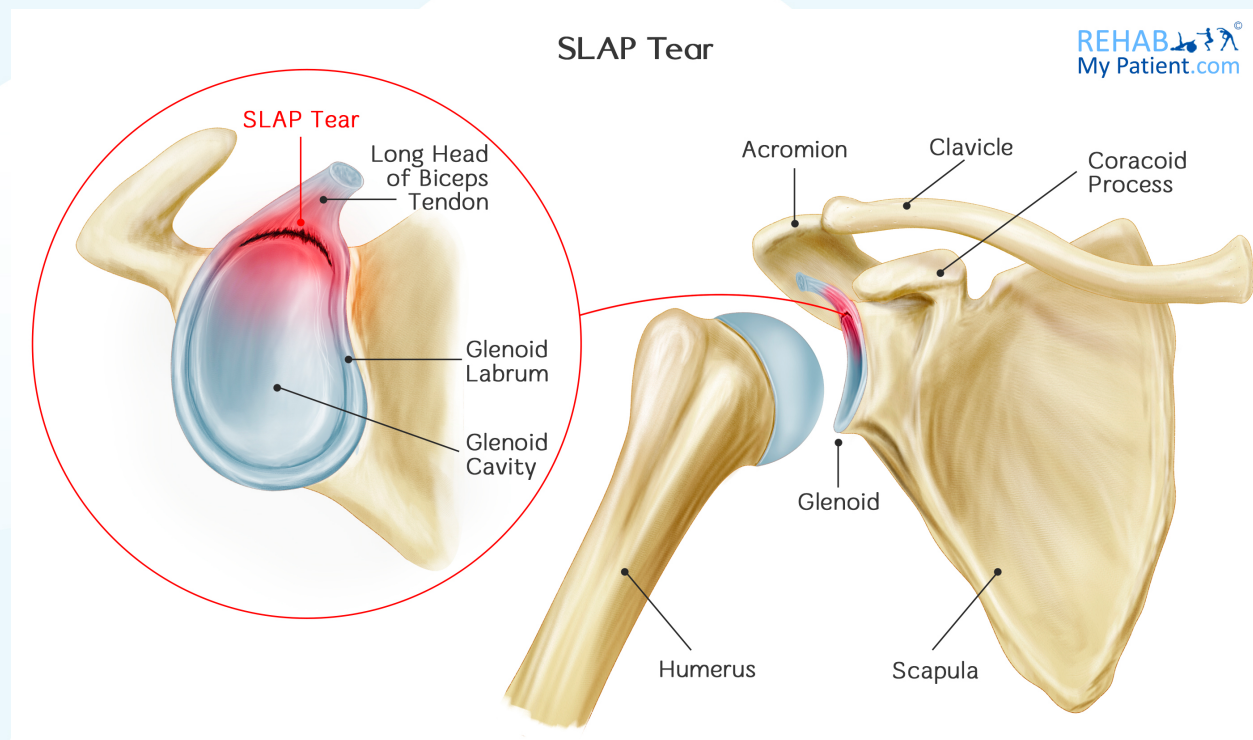
SLAP tears are injuries to the labrum of the shoulder, which is a ring of cartilage surrounding the socket within the shoulder joint. In cases of SLAP injuries, the top part of the labrum ends up getting injured. This top part is also where the biceps tendon and the labrum are attached. SLAP tears occur in both the posterior and anterior of the attachment point. Biceps tendons can be involved with this type of injury also.

SLAP Tear (Superior Labrum Anterior to Posterior) Anatomy

The labrum is like a rim around the shoulder socket. Imagine a golf tee – it has got a rim around the edge which helps to hold the ball in place. It's the same with the glenoid (socket) and the labrum. So the function of the labrum is to make the socket slightly deeper, meaning the joint is more stable and less likely to slip out.

However, during trauma or a bad fall, the shoulder can dislocate and this can tear the labrum and damage the biceps tendon. The shoulder doesn't necessarily need to dislocate for a SLAP tear to occur, but it is more common. Snow sports are one of the worst causes. SLAP tears can also be degenerative, so the labrum degenerates over many years and gradually tears with repeated wear and tear.

The biceps brachii muscle sits in the upper arm and it has a tendon that partially attaches to the top of the labrum. If the labrum tears badly, the biceps tendon can be injured too.



How to Treat a SLAP Tear:

1. Anti-Inflammatory Medication

An anti-inflammatory medication can help to reduce any swelling and pain in the injured site. Short term use is advised.

2. Physical Therapy

Specific types of exercises will help to restore movement and provide your shoulder with strength. Flexibility and movement exercises often include stretching the shoulder capsule out, which is the strong connective tissue surrounding the joint. Exercises for strengthening the muscles supporting the shoulder will provide you with pain relief and prevent additional injury. The exercise program can be continued for an additional three to six months, and they often require your working with a physical therapist.

3. Arthroscopic Repair

The surgical technique commonly used to repair SLAP tears is arthroscopy. During this procedure, the surgeon will insert a small camera into the shoulder joint. The camera will display pictures onto a television screen, which the surgeon uses to guide their surgical instruments during the procedure. Since the instruments are so thin in size, the surgeon only needs to make a small incision, rather than a larger one for normal surgery.

Tips:

- If you find yourself falling, try to prevent placing your arm out in front of you in an attempt to catch yourself.
- Being involved in a car accident can increase your chance of getting a SLAP tear.
- Avoid any forceful pulling on the arm, such as when you attempt to catch an object that is too heavy to lift.
- Dislocating the shoulder could cause the labrum to tear.
- If the arm is above your shoulder level, prevent any forceful or rapid movement.
- If your child (or teenager) has sustained a SLAP tear or labral tear, consider therapy first. They can respond very well and not require surgery.