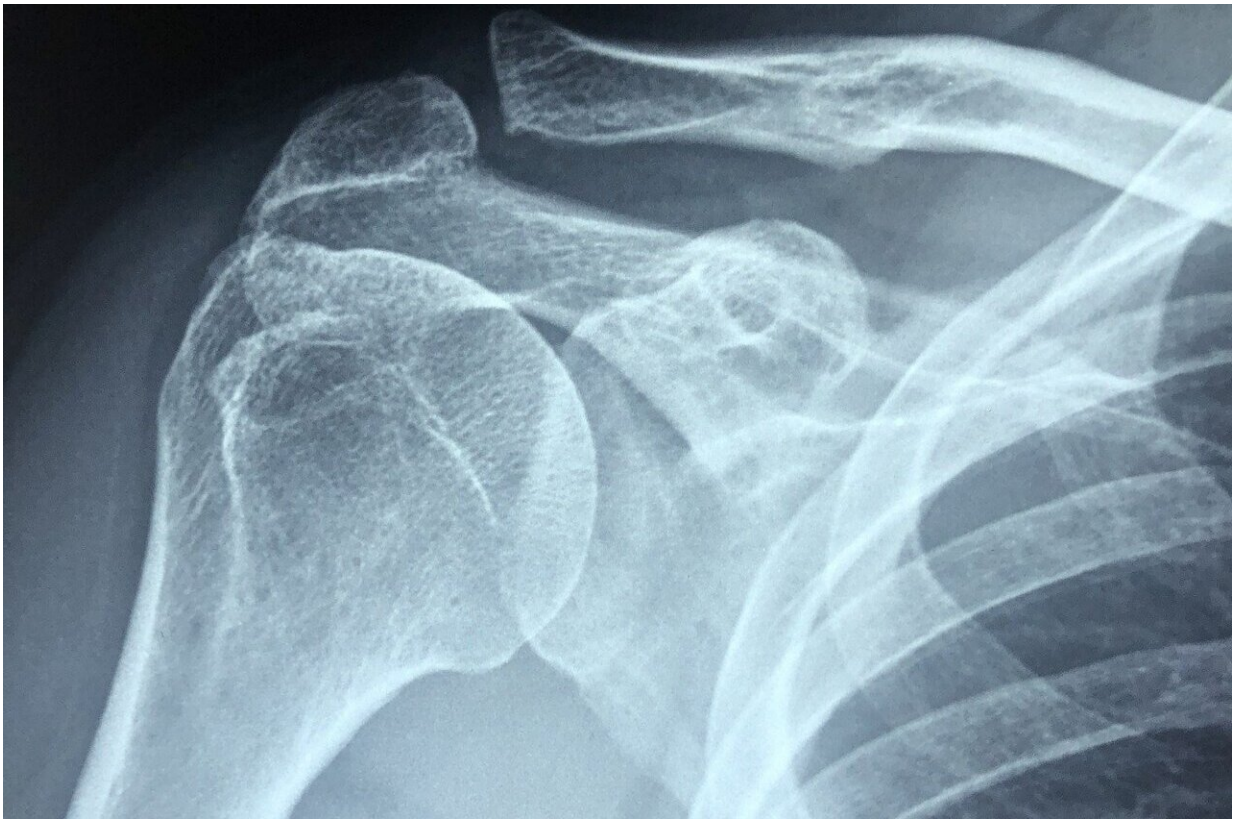


# How a new rotator cuff balloon procedure helps some patients get better

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Rotator cuff problems are the No. 1 reason why individuals go to the doctor because of shoulder pain. An innovative new rotator cuff procedure being done at Mayo Clinic may help some patients get better.

Dr. Joaquin Sanchez-Sotelo, a Mayo Clinic shoulder surgeon, explains a new balloon procedure that's helping some patients with irreparable rotator cuff tears recover faster with less pain.

"When there is a tear of the rotator cuff, in many [individuals](#), it is possible to do a primary repair of the tendons. However, in some individuals, there is such extensive damage to the tendons that the tendons cannot be fixed primarily," explains Dr. Sanchez-Sotelo.

That condition is called an irreparable rotator cuff tear, and while operations can fix it, they can be invasive. However, for some of these patients, a new less-invasive balloon procedure could be the answer.

"This procedure basically tries to place a temporary spacer between the humeral head and the rest of the scapula (shoulder blade). In a normal shoulder, when the rotator cuff is intact, the head of the humerus remains centered on the socket. When the tendons are torn, what happens is that the humeral head will migrate up and then the bones contact abnormally. And we think that that contact becomes painful also. The joint is now 'out of socket,'" and then the other remaining muscles cannot really work well," he explains.

"We place an inflatable device that occupies the space where the [rotator cuff tendons](#) are supposed to be. The humeral head is now prevented from contacting with the acromion. And because the head remains more centered, it is easier for [patients](#) to do rehabilitation and retrain the muscles that are still intact to maintain a healthy and functional joint."

The saline-filled balloon eventually dissolves in the body in about a year. The [benefits](#) are that the operation can be performed through a minimally invasive technique, and recovery is fast.

"For the right patient, I think it is possible that this could be a game-

changer in the treatment of this condition."

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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