

# Dealing with Bicep Tear or Strain

## TIPS FROM ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS

The right care, at the right time, for the right outcome.™



The two main causes of a torn bicep tendon are injury and overuse. The most common injuries are due to heavy lifting or falling on your arm. Overuse can cause the tendons to wear down or fray over time. This happens naturally as you age. It may also be made worse by repetitive motion and is common in people who participate in sports such as weightlifting, tennis, or swimming.

### BASIC INFO ON CONDITION

The most common upper arm injury is a **bicep strain or tear**. Your bicep is the muscle in the front of your upper arm. It helps you bend your elbow and twist your forearm.

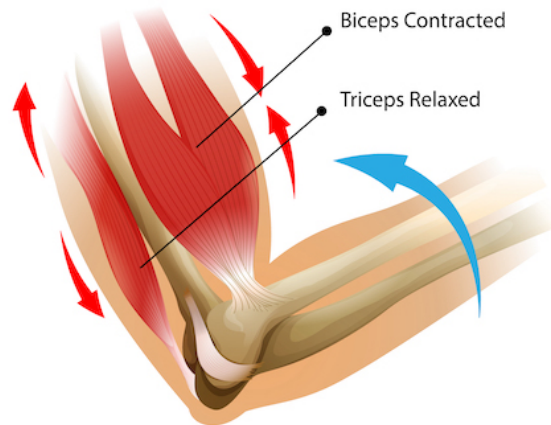
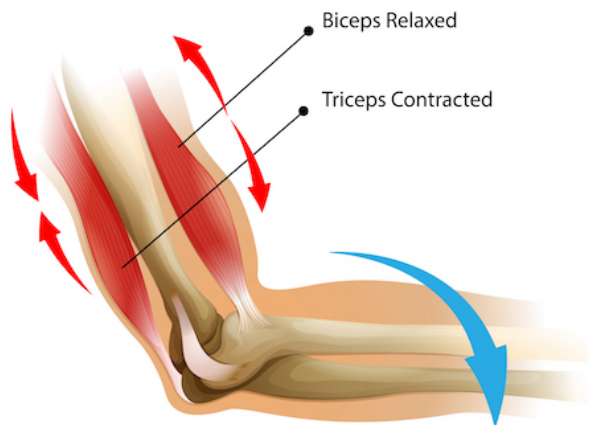
**Tendonitis** is the inflammation or irritation of the long head of the bicep tendon. This can cause micro-tears and is usually due to normal wear and tear but can also be made worse by repetitive motion. It often happens with other shoulder problems, such as arthritis, shoulder impingement, and chronic shoulder dislocation.

There are 3 tendons attach your bicep to bone. When you have a torn bicep, one of these tendons is damaged or detaches from the bone. Tears can also be partial (in which a tendon is damaged) or complete (in which the tendon completely detaches from the bone).

### SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of a torn bicep tendon include:

- a “pop” or tearing sensation when the injury happens
- warmth around the injury, swelling and bruising
- arm weakness, fatigue or increased pain in your arm when you do repetitive activity
- difficulty turning your palm
- bulge in your upper arm, or a gap or indentation in front of your elbow



## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

How long will this injury take to heal completely and how long till I can do work with it again?

Do I need surgery to repair this injury?

What types of medications can help with the pain and healing?

When can I start physiotherapy?

What do I need to make sure I don't do with this injury to prevent it getting worse?

## PREVENTION

Maintain proper strength in the shoulder, elbow, and forearm.

Avoid repetitive overhead lifting and general overuse of the shoulder, such as performing forceful pushing or pulling activities, or lifting objects that are simply too heavy.

Use special care when performing activities, such as lowering a heavy item to the ground.

## RECOVERY

Mild tendonitis that a person can treat at home may resolve after 1–2 weeks.

It often takes four to five months before you can start returning to normal activities.



After surgery, you'll probably need to wear a sling or otherwise immobilize your arm such as in a splint or cast for four to six weeks.

You'll then have to do physical therapy and exercises to help strengthen your arm and improve range of motion.

Complete recovery from surgery can take up to a year, although most people recover much of their range of motion and strength in four to six months.

## STANDARD RESTRICTIONS AND RETURN TO WORK

### PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy can help you regain strength and range of motion after a bicep tendon injury. A physical therapist will take you through a series of motions designed to help heal your injury and relieve pain.

A physical therapist or your doctor might also give you exercises to do at home when you're healed enough to do so. These might include exercises to flex and extend your arm, arm rotations, and strength-building exercises like bicep curls.

### OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUG



Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are over-the-counter medications that help reduce inflammation. They can help reduce the inflammation (the hallmark of tendonitis), as well as help reduce swelling from bicep tears.

They can also help reduce the pain you might have from any bicep tendon injuries.

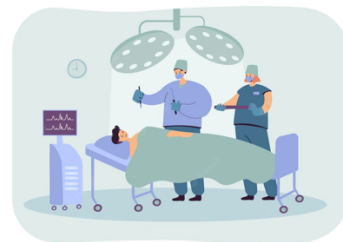
### TAKE IT EASY

Taking time off from exercising, lifting, or holding anything heavy — and using your arm as little as possible — can help you recover, especially from overuse injuries. Be sure to avoid any activity that causes pain, even if it doesn't seem strenuous.

### TORN BICEP SURGERY

If none of the measures above help your bicep injury heal, or if more than half the tendon is torn, your doctor might recommend surgery to repair the bicep tendon.

Many doctors will recommend surgery as a first-line treatment for bicep tendon tears at the elbow, although surgery can also be done later if other treatments don't restore range of motion and strength.



Surgery is used to reattach the tendon to the bone.