

Let's Talk About...Accessing the Supraspinatus Tendon

By Ben Benjamin, PhD

Question: How should the arm be positioned to manually access the supraspinatus tendon?

Answer: The hand must be placed behind the back in medial rotation.

The supraspinatus tendon lies between the infraspinatus and subscapularis tendons. It is the most lateral tendon of the rotator cuff group. It is impossible to palpate with the person in the standard anatomical position because it is under the acromion. In order to access the supraspinatus tendon, it must be brought to the anterior part of the shoulder. This is accomplished by placing the arm behind the back, thus medially rotating the humerus.

In order to locate the injured tendon, the therapist must trace the outline of the acromion until a prominent bump is felt at the most anterior portion of this bone. The therapist then drops his or her finger down a half-inch or so to the tendon, which is wedged between the acromion and the head of the humerus. The distal attachment of the supraspinatus tendon is at this precise location.

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