

# My shoulder blade rubs against my ribs causing a grinding feeling

**Q:** Last fall I suffered a shoulder injury that still plagues me. Now I'm starting to have problems with my shoulder blade rubbing against my ribs. Is this a new problem or part of the ongoing shoulder problem?

**A:** The scapula (more often referred to as your "wing bone" or shoulder blade) is a key reason why your shoulder and arm work properly. In addition to its role in shoulder operation, it also acts as a moving platform for the shoulder ball-and-socket joint to function properly.

In short, the scapula is a silent partner with the shoulder in moving the arm in any and all directions. Any injury that affects the scapula can lead to a condition known as scapular dyskinesia. Dyskinesia just means the body part isn't moving in the normal rhythm or sequence.

With a shoulder injury, you may not feel anything directly wrong with the scapula at first. But over time (as you have more difficulty moving your arm) it is no longer moving as it should. Another sign of a scapular problem is what's called scapular winging. As you move your arm, the affected side will also result in excessive "winging".

The cause of scapular dyskinesia is usually mechanical such as muscle stiffness or shortening, bone fractures, or alterations in the shape of the scapula. Pictures of patients with scapular dyskinesia show that the altered position of the scapula affects all aspects of upper extremity function.

Treatment depends on a thorough and careful evaluation process to detect all areas of involvement. With this information, you can develop a treatment plan for this problem. Of course, addressing fractures, rotator cuff tears or degeneration and the impingement that comes from altered scapular alignment and movement of the scapula as well.

Reference: W. Benjamin Kibler, MD, et al. Scapular Dyskinesia and Its Relation to Shoulder Injury. In Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.