Surgical And Non-Surgical Bicep Treatments Show Promise

A patient with a long head biceps (LHB) tendinopathy, which is a pain and/or tearing of the tendon, may also have a shoulder problem and/or a rotator cuff tear. Traditional treatments include both surgical and non-surgical approaches.

“The surgeon’s goal in treating any long head biceps tendinopathy is to address the pain in a way that also respects the patient’s lifestyle. And, as we found, there is a variety of excellent surgical and non-surgical options. In developing this review, we also discovered the need for more comparative research data on surgical versus non-surgical treatment outcomes for this condition,” aaid Shane Nho, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon who practices in Chicago and whose review appears in the November issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*.

Some trends and statistics from the report include:

- Recent studies reported no significant difference in function or patient satisfaction between the two primary surgical options, biceps tenotomy or tenodesis.
- Each year, an average of 10 million people seek medical attention for a shoulder injury and an average of four million people come in with arm injuries.
- Both surgical treatments for LHB tendinopathy are statistically successful, with a complication rate of less than one percent.
- The authors agree that non-surgical treatment is the first – and in many cases may be the only – treatment necessary.
- The authors of this review seem to agree that of the two surgical options, biceps tenodesis should be used in younger, active patients.
- The first line of treatment for LHB tendinopathy is a variety of non-surgical options, such as rest, anti-inflammatory drugs, activity modification and physical therapy. If those treatments do not offer the patient relief, a course of corticosteroid injections may be attempted. The authors do, however, report a concern about intratendinous corticosteroid injections, which may predispose the patient to tendon rupture. More research is needed to address this concern.

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