

# There's no need to shoulder the pain

By Janet Yearous

Over the years, not much has slowed down Beverly Olson of Cashton, Wis. She kept busy tending her large garden, canning, sewing and all the activities that go along with raising five active children. And, she did it despite the fact she injured her rotator cuff tendons in both shoulders in 1981.

Beverly learned to deal with the resulting decreased range of motion and waning strength. However, her injuries altered the function of her shoulders and over the ensuing 25 years, led to an arthritic condition known as cuff-tear arthropathy.

"The pain got so bad," recalls Beverly. "I had several cortisone shots but they were no longer helping much. I couldn't do the things I needed to do." Beverly was unable to do everyday tasks like washing and styling her own hair because she couldn't raise her arms high enough.

Finally, in 2006, Beverly talked with Gundersen Lutheran orthopaedic surgeon Edward Riley, MD. He told Beverly about a relatively new procedure called reverse shoulder arthroplasty (first performed in the U.S. in 2004, but

performed in Europe for more than 20 years).

"In a healthy shoulder, the ball-shaped end of the arm bone fits into the socket of the shoulder blade. Normally, the rotator cuff and deltoid (shoulder) muscles work together to raise the arm. With the rotator cuff damaged, it becomes difficult to lift the arm," Dr. Riley explains.

As with conventional joint replacement, in reverse shoulder arthroplasty, Dr. Riley replaces the shoulder joint with an artificial ball and socket joint. The orientation, however, is reversed so the ball portion is attached to the shoulder blade and the socket is placed in the arm bone. This allows the deltoid muscle to raise the arm.

Beverly's response: "When can you do it?"

Beverly had surgery on one shoulder in January 2007, the other a few months later. "I no longer have pain in my shoulders. I can lift my arms and have nearly full range of motion. I'm so happy and would recommend it to anyone," says Beverly.

"But reverse shoulder replacement is not for everybody," cautions

Dr. Riley. "It is best suited for patients who have shoulder arthritis coupled with irreparable rotator cuff tear, like Beverly."

If you have moderate to severe shoulder pain, limited function and think you might be a candidate for joint replacement surgery, call Gundersen Lutheran Orthopaedics at (608) 775-2276 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 52276. ●

## **An ounce of prevention...**

**The best treatment for shoulder injuries is to reduce your risks of injuries in the first place:**

- **Strengthen arm, neck and back muscles to decrease strain on shoulders.**
- **Do gentle stretching for arms and shoulders before and after activity.**
- **Don't lift or carry objects too heavy for you.**
- **Use correct lifting techniques to avoid strain on your shoulders.**
- **If you're an athlete, talk with a sports medicine specialist.**
- **Maintain good posture and overall health.**