

Winged Scapula

Your shoulder blade looks like a small wing because one muscle is tight and another is weak.

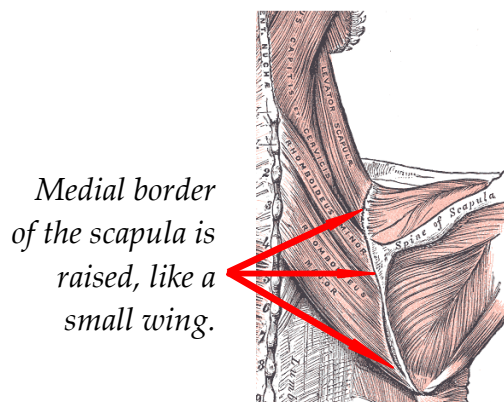
Location of Winged Scapula

(a) Symptoms

You may think this is a back problem, because the visible sign is that the medial (inside) border of the scapula (shoulder blade) is raised like a wing. But in fact it is an imbalance in the *shoulder musculature*.

(b) Causes

The most likely culprits here are the *serratus anterior* and *pectoralis minor* muscles (see the illustration below).

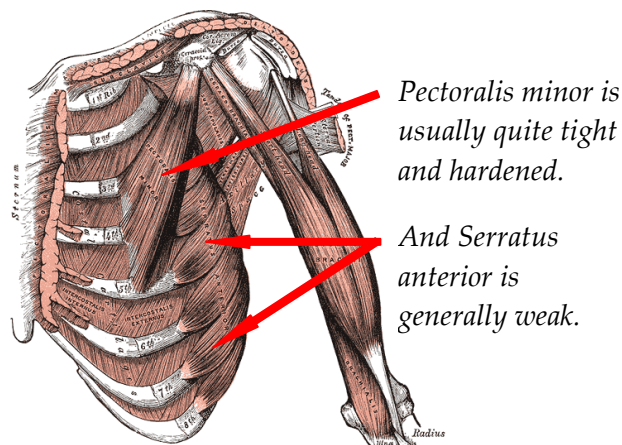


Pectoralis Minor and Serratus Anterior in Winged Scapula

(c) Serratus Anterior: How it Contributes

The fibres of *serratus anterior* originate on the medial border and anterior surface of the scapula (shoulder blade) (that is, under the scapula as you look at it from behind), and attach at the front to the ribs. It is a key job of *serratus anterior* to hold the scapula (particularly the medial border thereof) against the ribs at the back. It makes the shoulder blade “hug” the ribs.

Weakness of this muscle in relation to other muscles will lead to it being unable to carry out this key function.



(d) Pectoralis Minor: How it Contributes

If *pectoralis minor* is tight it will pull the shoulder forward and in the end lead to a compensatory weakening of the *rhomboids* and *serratus anterior* muscles. If *pec minor* remains tight it makes the job of *serratus anterior* in holding the medial border of the scapula close to the ribs more difficult, eventually leading to fatigue and weakening of that muscle.

In either case the scapula is unable to maintain its “rib-hugging” position, and develops a “winged” appearance.

(PTO)

(e) Treatment

Pectoralis Minor

Your practitioner may pay specific attention to Goltech® cross-fibre and myofascial release of *pectoralis minor* if it appears to be contributing to the problem.

Serratus Anterior

Weakness of the *serratus anterior* muscle may be due to damage to the *long thoracic nerve*, about which you can do nothing.

However the weakness may also be due to unbalanced training in the gym; too many bench presses in relation to the number of scapula retraction exercises performed. It may also be weakened as the result of an injury.

Your practitioner may provide you with an exercise to strengthen the *serratus anterior* muscles.