

Shoulder Exercises

Phase 1

1. Pendulum exercise

Bend over at the waist and let the arm hang down. Using your body to initiate movement, swing the arm gently forward and backward and in a circular motion.

2. Shoulder shrug

Shrug shoulders upward as illustrated.

3. Shoulder blade pinches

Pinch shoulder blades backward and together, as illustrated.

4. Supine passive arm elevation

Lie on your back. Hold the affected arm at the wrist with the opposite hand. Using the strength of the opposite arm, lift the affected arm upward, as if to bring the arm overhead, slowly lower the arm back to the bed.

5. Supine external rotation

Lie on your back. Keep the elbow of the affected arm against your side with the elbow bent at 90 degrees. Using a cane or long stick in the opposite hand, push against the hand of the affected arm so that the affected arm rotates outward. Hold 10 seconds, relax and repeat.

4. Behind-the-back internal rotation

Sitting in a chair or standing, place the hand of the operated arm behind your back at the waistline. Use your opposite hand, as illustrated, to help the other hand higher toward the shoulder blade. Hold 10 seconds, relax and repeat.

7. Isometric exercises for IR, ER, FLX, EXT, ABD, ADD at 0° of Abduction.

8. Rhythmic stabilization and proprioceptive training drills with physical therapist

9. Ball squeeze exercise

Phase 2

1. Supine / Seated Forward Elevation (Overhead Elbow Lift)

During this phase, you can stand or sit in a chair. If it is easier, begin lying on your back until you achieve maximal motion, then use the standing or seated position. Assume an upright position with erect posture, looking straight ahead. Place your hands on either thigh with the operated thumb facing up and your elbow straight. In the beginning, this stretch is not performed solely with the operated arm, but uses the uninjured hand for assistance going up and coming down. As you become stronger, you can raise and lower your arm without assistance. The operated arm should be lifted as high as possible, or to your endpoint of pain. Upon reaching that endpoint, take the uninjured hand and actually push on the outstretched forearm of the operated arm. Push 1 or 2 inches to achieve a “terminal stretch”. Hold 10 seconds per repetition. Release and slowly return to the start position.



2. Standing external rotation

Stand in a doorway facing the doorframe. Keep the operated arm firmly against your side, and the elbow at a right (90 degree) angle. By moving your feet, rotate your body away from the door to produce outward rotation at the shoulder.

3. Theraband internal rotation - see theraband exercise instruction sheet

4. Theraband external rotation - see theraband exercise instruction sheet

5. Standing forward flexion ('full-can') exercise

Stand facing a mirror with the hands rotated so that the thumbs face forward. While keeping the shoulder blade 'set' and keeping the elbows straight, raise the arms forward and upward to shoulder level with a slight outward angle (30°). Pause for one second and slowly lower and repeat.

6. Prone rowing exercise

The starting position for this exercise is to bend over at the waist so that the affected arm is hanging freely straight down. Alternatively, lie face down on your bed with the operated arm hanging freely off of the side. While keeping the shoulder blade 'set', raise the arm up toward the ceiling while bending at the elbow. The elbow should be drawn along the side of the body until the hands touch the lower ribs. Always return slowly to the start position.

7. Prone horizontal abduction ('T's)

The starting position for this exercise is to bend over at the waist so that the affected arm is hanging freely straight down. Alternatively, lie face down on your bed with the operated arm hanging freely off of the side. Rotate your hand so that the thumb faces forward. While keeping the shoulder blade 'set' and keeping the elbows straight, slowly raise your arm away from your body to shoulder height, through a pain-free range of motion (so that your hand now has the thumb facing forward, and aligned with your cheek). Hold that position for 1 to 2 seconds and slowly lower. Limit the height that you raise the arm to 90 degrees, or in other words, horizontal to the floor.

8. Prone extension

The starting position for this exercise is to bend over at the waist so that the affected arm is hanging freely straight down. Alternatively, lie face down on your bed with the operated arm hanging freely off of the side. While keeping the shoulder blade 'set' and keeping the elbow straight, raise the arm backward toward your hip with the thumb pointing outward. Do not lift your hand past the level of your hip.

Phase 3

1. Sidelying external rotation

Lying on the non-operated side, bend your elbow to a 90-degree angle and keep the operated arm firmly against your side with your hand resting on your abdomen. By rotation at the shoulder, raise your hand upward, toward the ceiling through a comfortable range of motion. Hold this position for 1 to 2 seconds, and then slowly lower the hand.



2. Prone scaption ('Y's)

The starting position for this exercise is to bend over at the waist so that the affected arm is hanging freely straight down. Alternatively, lie face down on your bed with the operated arm hanging freely off of the side. Keep the shoulder blade 'set' and keep the elbows straight. Slowly raise the arm away from your body and slightly forward through a pain-free range of motion (so that your hand now has the thumb facing up, and is aligned with your forehead).

Hold that position for 1 to 2 seconds and slowly lower. Limit the height that you raise the arm to 90 degrees, or in other words, horizontal to the floor.

3. Hand-behind-the-head stretch

Lie on your back. Clasp your hands and place your hands behind your head with the elbows facing forward. Slowly lower the elbows to the side to stretch the shoulder outward. Hold for 10 seconds, and then return to the starting position.

4. Supine cross-chest stretch

Lying on your back, hold the elbow of the operated arm with the opposite hand. Gently stretch the elbow toward the opposite shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds.

5. Sidelying internal rotation stretch

Lie on your side with the arm positioned so that the arm is at a right angle to the body and the elbow bent at a 90° angle. Keeping the elbow at a right angle, rotate the arm forward as if to touch the thumb to the table. Apply a gentle stretch with the opposite arm. Hold 10 to 15 seconds.

5. Wall slide stretch

Stand facing a wall; place the hands of both arms on the wall. Slide the hands and arms upward. As you are able to stretch the hand and arm higher, you should move your body closer to the wall. Hold 10 seconds, lower the arm by pressing the hand into the wall and letting it slide slowly down.

6. Standing forward flexion

Stand facing a mirror with the hands rotated so that the thumbs face forward. Raise the arm upward keeping the elbow straight. Try to raise the arm by hinging at the shoulder as opposed to raising the arm with the shoulder blade. Do 10 repetitions to 90 degrees. If you can do this without hiking the shoulder blade, do 10 repetitions fully overhead.

Phase 4

1. External rotation at 90° abduction stretch

Lie on your back. Support the upper arm, if needed, with towels or a small pillow. Keep arm at 90 degrees to the body and the elbow bent at 90 degrees. Using a stick and the opposite arm, stretch as if to bring the thumb to the corner of the table adjacent to your ear. Hold for 10 seconds, and then return to the starting position

2. Prone external rotation at 90° abduction ('U's)

Lie face down on a table with your arm hanging over the side of the table. Raise the arm to shoulder height at a 90° angle to the body. While holding the arm in this position, rotate the hand upward, until the hand is even with the elbow. Hold one second and slowly let the hand rotate to the starting position and repeat.

Theraband Strengthening

These resistance exercises should be done very slowly in both directions. Your goal is to achieve a maximum amount of strengthening while listening to your endpoint of pain.

Obviously, we want to strengthen you throughout the full range of motion. It is very important that this exercise be done very slowly, not only when you complete the exercise (concentric), but also as you come back to the start position (eccentric). The slower the motion, the more maximal the contraction throughout a full range of motion.

1. External Rotation

Attach the theraband at waist level in a doorjamb or other. While standing sideways to the door and looking straight ahead, grasp one end of the band and pull the band all the way through until it is taut. Feet are shoulder width apart and the knees are slightly flexed. The injured elbow is placed next to the side with the injured hand as close to your chest as possible (think of this elbow as being a hinge on a gate). Taking the cord in the injured hand, move the hand away from the body as far as it feels comfortable (at least 90 degrees is our goal), or to where the endpoint of pain limits you. Return to the start position; if you would like, during future repetitions go a few more degrees to work more of a range of motion.

2. Internal Rotation

Attach the Theraband at waist level in a doorjamb or other. While standing sideways to the door and looking straight ahead, grasp one end of the handle and pull the cord all the way through until it is taut. Feet are shoulder width apart and the knees are slightly flexed. The injured elbow is placed next to the side and is flexed at 90 degrees (think of this elbow as being a hinge on a gate). Taking the cord in the injured hand, move the hand toward the chest as far as it feels comfortable, or to where the endpoint of pain limits you. Return to the start position

3. Shoulder Shrug

Stand on the theraband with your feet at should width apart and look straight ahead. Next, straighten up, keeping the knees slightly flexed, with your arms straight down at the sides (palms in). Slowly raise the shoulders in a shrug (toward the ears), then rotate the shoulders backward in a circular motion, and finally down to the original position.

This movement is completed while keeping constant tension on the cord.

4. Seated / Standing Row

Attach the theraband in a doorjamb or other. Sit or stand facing the door. Use a wide flat-footed stance and keep your back straight. Begin with the arms slightly flexed, hands together at waist level in front of your body, thumbs pointing upward, and with the cord taut. You are producing a rowing motion. Pull the cord all the way toward the chest. While pulling the cord, the elbows should be drawn along the side of the body until the hands touch the lower ribs. Always return slowly to the start position.

5. Standing Forward Punch

Attach the theraband at waist level in the doorjamb. Facing away from the door, stand in a boxing position with one leg ahead of the other (stride position). Do not bend at the waist and remain in an upright position. If the right shoulder is the injured extremity, you will want to grasp the handle in the right hand and step out until the cord is taut. If you use the right hand, the left foot should be forward in the stride position.

Begin with your right arm at waist level and bend the elbow at a 90 degree angle, with the elbow remaining near your side. Slowly punch forward while slightly raising the right arm in a forward, upward punching motion. The hand should reach approximately neck level with the right arm almost straight.

6. Biceps Curls

Place your feet on the cord, shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent. Keeping your elbows close to the sides of your body, slowly bend the arm at the elbow and curl towards the shoulder. Alternate arms while performing this exercise.

7. Dynamic Hug

With the tubing attach behind you at shoulder height, grip both ends of the tubing in your hands with the tubing on the outside of your shoulders. Pull the band forward and slightly downward in a ‘hugging’ motion, or as if you were wrapping both arm around a small tree. Pause and return slowly to the starting position.

8. ‘W’s

With the tubing attached in front of you, stand with the tubing in both hands with the elbows bent at 90° and fixed at your side. Pull the band outward, keeping the elbow at your side. The arms rotate outward making the shape of a ‘W’.

9. Theraband external rotation at 90°.

Stand with the theraband attached in front of you. Keeping the arm elevated to 90 degrees and the elbow at a 90-degree angle, rotate the hand and arm slowly backward and then return slowly to the start position.

10. Theraband internal rotation at 90°.

Stand with the theraband attached behind you. Keeping the arm elevated to 90 degrees and the elbow at a 90-degree angle, rotate the hand and arm slowly forward and then return slowly to the start position.

11. Theraband standing 'T's.

Stand with the theraband attached in front of you. Stand with the arm flexed forward at shoulder height with the elbow straight. While keeping the elbow straight, pull the arm toward the rear until the arm is by your side.

12. Theraband diagonal-up

Stand with the theraband attached on your left side for your right hand. Start with your right hand on the left hip with the thumb facing the hip. Start by pulling the band so that your hand travels up and behind your head.

13. Theraband diagonal-down

Stand with the theraband attached behind you at shoulder level. Start with your arm in throwing position. Pull the band down and across your body so that your thumb faces the opposite hip.

Shoulder Plyometric Program

1. Throw with arm at side

For the right arm, stand sideways so that your left side is facing a 'rebounder' or wall. Keep the right elbow tucked against your right side with the elbow at a right angle. Throw a 1 to 2 pound ball across the body, keeping the elbow tucked to the side, to the rebounder. Catch the rebounded ball in the same arm position, allowing the arm to comfortably stretch back, and then quickly throw the ball again. Do not pause or stop the ball movement after catching it.

2. Wall dribbles

Stand facing a wall with your arm held comfortably overhead, above the shoulder joint. Quickly dribble a 1 to 2 pound ball against the wall using your fingertips.

3. Rebounder throwing

Stand facing a rebounder, with the arm raised in the throwing position. Throw a 1 to 2 pound ball and then catch the rebounded ball in the same throwing position. On the catch, allow the arm to comfortably rotate backward and then quickly throw the ball again. Do not pause or stop the ball movement after catching it.

4. Throwing

Stand facing a rebounder or wall. Raise the arm into throwing position. Throw a 1 or 2-pound ball at the rebounder. As the ball bounces back to you, catch the ball in the same throwing position, allowing the arm to comfortably stretch back into external rotation. Without pausing, quickly throw the ball again.

5. Decelerations

Kneel on the floor on the knee on the same side of your throwing arm. Flip a 1 or 2 pound ball backwards over your throwing shoulder. Catch the ball in the throwing position and then decelerate your arm forward through your throwing motion. Quickly flip the ball backward again and repeat.

6. Wall dribble 90's

Stand facing the wall. Raise the arm into your throwing position. Keeping the elbow close to the wall, quickly bounce a 1 to 2 pound ball against the wall in this position. As you catch the ball, allow the arm to comfortably stretch back into external rotation. Quickly bounce the ball on the wall again. Do not pause or stop the ball movement after catching it.

7. Wall dribble circles

Stand facing the wall. Raise the arm into an overhead position. Keeping the elbow close to the wall, quickly bounce a 1 to 2 pound ball against the wall using your fingertips. Dribble the ball as you move your arm in an arc from above your head down to shoulder level and back.