



Personal exercise program

Musculo-skeletal and Pelvic health physiotherapy services
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Rotator cuff related pain

What is the rotator cuff?

The shoulder is a complex region of the body made up of 3 joints, and multiple muscles and ligaments. The rotator cuff muscles are found deep within the shoulder. They arise from the shoulder blade and attach via their tendons to the top of the shoulder bone. They provide strength and stability to the shoulder during movement. When there is a problem with these tendons, individuals can experience pain, weakness and stiffness on lifting the shoulder up, and with rotational movements.

How do problems with the rotator cuff develop?

- injury or trauma to the arm
- weakness in the rotator cuff muscles
- repetitive activities/exercise
- following a change in activity or stress on the shoulder
- a flare up of degenerative changes within the tendons

When the rotator cuff muscles have been injured or aggravated they can become painful over the top of the shoulder. Some people also experience pain traveling down the side of the arm to the elbow.

The tendons within the shoulder can become inflamed and painful which can make movement difficult. In some cases these muscles can over-protect the shoulder, becoming very stiff and limited with movements. Because of the pain and limited movement, these muscles become weaker and make movement even more challenging.

Aim of physiotherapy in management

Managing how much load and stress goes through your shoulder is important to treating rotator cuff pain. Initially reducing aggravating activities can help settle down the pain, with the aim of building back up to your activity and tasks over time. However, it is important that we do not completely rest the shoulder or these muscles will become weaker and increase your pain and limit your function.

The aim of this rehabilitation programme is to gradually increase the range of movement and strength of the shoulder.

Over a period of time you should notice an increase in your strength and you should be able to build up the amount of exercises you can tolerate and progress onto harder exercises.

Small amounts of pain is acceptable and can be expected during the rehabilitation exercises but should not aggravate your pain or make it worse.

- Pain should be 4/10 or less during the activity
- No increased pain for prolonged periods 24 hours after exercises
- The pain should not interfere with sleep following the exercises

You can increase and decrease the amount of exercises you can tolerate depending on your pain and symptoms.

Perform 2-3 sets of these exercises a day. You can practice the sets all in one go with a rest of 3-4 minutes. If this is too much you can split the exercises up throughout the day with a longer rest period.

You want to practice each of these exercises to fatigue or do as many as you can tolerate as your pain allows.

The exercises using weights start by using a small weight (1kg or a can of beans).



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Shoulder Press

Stand tall. Hold weights at shoulder height with your elbows pointing to the sides.

Press the weights up to straighten arms. Return to the starting position in a controlled manner.

Note:

- Try not to shrug your shoulders.
- Keep abdominals tight to avoid excessively extending your lower back.

Repeat _____ times.



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Lateral Raise

Stand tall, with arms by your sides, holding weights.

Lift your arms to the side, keeping elbows straight. Palms face downwards or forwards.

Note: Keep your chest open and try not to shrug your shoulders.

Repeat _____ times.



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Bent Over Lateral Raise

Stand with your trunk and buttocks active holding weights in each hand. Tilt forward from your hips, keeping spine and neck in a neutral position.

Squeeze your shoulder blades in and down. Lift your arms to the side with elbows slightly bent. Lower the arms down in a controlled manner.

Repeat _____ times.



Lie face down. Take your arms out to a 90 degree angle.

Tighten the muscles between your shoulder blades and lift your arms with thumbs pointing upwards. Do not lift your elbows above your body. You can progress this by holding onto a weight with each hand.

Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat times.

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Lie face down. Support your body weight on your forearms and toes.

Tighten your stomach muscles and keep your neck and back straight.

Hold seconds.

Repeat times.

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Push Up, Wide Hand Position

On your hands and knees, hands slightly wider than shoulders. Buttocks and trunk active, body in a straight line.



In a controlled manner lower your chest close to the floor. Push back up.

Repeat times.

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Plank Taps

Start on your hands and toes, with your body in a straight line. Push your chest slightly away from the floor and hold the position.



Shift the weight onto one arm and tap the supporting arm with the other hand. Try to keep the position of your upper back (push strongly with the supportive arm towards the floor) and keep pelvis as level as possible. Bring the weight back to two arms and repeat with the other side.

Repeat times.

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Bird-dog

On your hands and knees, hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Spine is in a neutral position.



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Lift one arm and opposite leg. Lift only as high as you can control the position of your spine.

Note:

- Keep your lower back in a neutral position.
- Try to keep the weight shift sideways as small as possible.

Repeat _____ times.



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Stand or sit with the hand of the arm to be exercised on your opposite hip. Hold on to a rubber exercise band.

Pull the band up towards the opposite side.

Repeat _____ times.



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Sit on a chair with your arm lifted out to the side and elbow at a right angle supported on a table. Hold on to an exercise band which is in front of you.

Pull the band keeping your elbow bent and resting on the table.

Repeat _____ times.



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Aim: The Front Raise (Shoulder Flexion) strengthens the front part of the shoulder.

Instructions:

Begin with a slightly stretched band anchored under your foot. Lift the band in front of your body. Keep your thumb pointing upward and your elbow straight. Avoid arching your back.

Reps _____



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Stand with your arm up and out to the side. Hold an exercise band.

Pull the band down and across your body letting your thumb lead the movement.

Repeat _____ times.



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Stand with your arm pointing sideways and back. Hold on to an exercise band.

Pull the band forward and in front of your body.

Repeat _____ times.



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Stand with your arm up and across your body. Hold on to an exercise band.

Pull the band down and out.

Repeat _____ times.
