



ROTATOR CUFF & SHOULDER CONDITIONING PROGRAM

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After an injury or surgery, an exercise conditioning program will help you return to daily activities and enjoy a more active, healthy lifestyle. Following a well-structured conditioning program will also help you return to sports and other recreational activities. **This is a general conditioning program that provides a wide range of exercises.** To make sure the program is safe and effective for you, it should be performed under your doctor's supervision — talk to your doctor or physical therapist about which exercises will best help you meet your rehabilitation goals.

STRENGTH

WHY IT MATTERS

- ♦ Strengthening the muscles that support your shoulder will help keep your shoulder joint stable. Keeping these muscles strong can relieve shoulder pain and prevent further injury.

FLEXIBILITY

WHY IT MATTERS

- ♦ Stretching the muscles that you strengthen is important for restoring range of motion and preventing injury. Gently stretching after strengthening exercises can help reduce muscle soreness and keep your muscles long and flexible.

TARGET MUSCLES

- ♦ Deltoids — front, back and over the shoulder
- ♦ Trapezius muscles — upper back
- ♦ Rhomboid muscles — upper back
- ♦ Teres muscles — supporting the shoulder joint
- ♦ Supraspinatus — supporting the shoulder joint
- ♦ Infraspinatus — supporting the shoulder joint
- ♦ Subscapularis — front of the shoulder
- ♦ Biceps — front of the upper arm
- ♦ Triceps — back of the upper arm

LENGTH OF PROGRAM

This shoulder conditioning program should be continued for **4 to 6 weeks**, unless otherwise specified by your doctor or physical therapist. After your recovery, these exercises can be continued as a maintenance program for lifelong protection and health of your shoulders. Performing the exercises **2 to 3 days a week** will maintain strength and range of motion.

GETTING STARTED

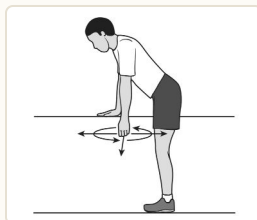
- ♦ **Warm up:** before doing these exercises, warm up with 5 to 10 minutes of low-impact activity, such as walking or riding a stationary bicycle
- ♦ **Stretch:** after the warm-up, do the stretching exercises before moving on to the strengthening exercises. When you have finished the strengthening exercises, repeat the stretching exercises to end the program
- ♦ **Do not ignore pain:** you should not feel pain during an exercise. Talk to your doctor or physical therapist if you have any pain while exercising
- ♦ **Ask questions:** if you are not sure how to do an exercise, or how often to do it, contact your doctor, your physical therapist or our office at 615-936-7846

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STRETCHING EXERCISES



EXERCISE 01

PENDULUM

Works: Deltoids, supraspinatus, infraspinatus, subscapularis

- ◆ Lean forward and place one hand on a counter or table for support; let your other arm hang freely
- ◆ Gently swing your arm forward and back, then side to side, then in a circular motion
- ◆ Repeat the entire sequence with the other arm

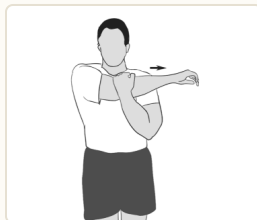
TIP Do not round your back or lock your knees.

REPETITIONS

2 sets of 10

DAYS PER WEEK

5 to 6



EXERCISE 02

CROSSOVER ARM STRETCH

Works: Posterior deltoid · felt at the back of the shoulder

- ◆ Relax your shoulders and gently pull one arm across your chest as far as possible, holding at your upper arm
- ◆ Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, then relax for 30 seconds. Repeat with the other arm

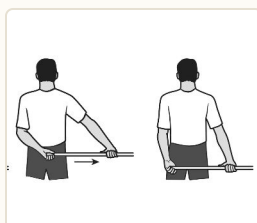
TIP Do not pull or put pressure on your elbow.

REPETITIONS

4 each side

DAYS PER WEEK

5 to 6



EXERCISE 03

PASSIVE INTERNAL ROTATION

Works: Subscapularis · felt at the front of the shoulder

- ◆ Hold a stick behind your back with one hand and lightly grasp the other end with your other hand
- ◆ Pull the stick horizontally so that your shoulder is passively stretched to the point of feeling a pull, without pain
- ◆ Hold for 30 seconds, relax for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other side
- ◆ **Equipment:** a light stick, such as a yardstick

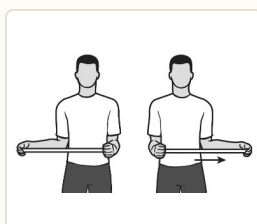
TIP Do not lean over or twist to the side while pulling the stick.

REPETITIONS

4 each side

DAYS PER WEEK

5 to 6



EXERCISE 04

PASSIVE EXTERNAL ROTATION

Works: Infraspinatus, teres minor · felt in the back of the shoulder

- ◆ Grasp the stick with one hand and cup the other end with the other hand
- ◆ Keep the elbow of the shoulder you are stretching against your side and push the stick horizontally to the point of feeling a pull, without pain
- ◆ Hold for 30 seconds, relax for 30 seconds, then repeat on the other side
- ◆ **Equipment:** a light stick, such as a yardstick

TIP Keep your hips facing forward and do not twist.

REPETITIONS

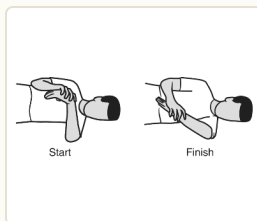
4 each side

DAYS PER WEEK

5 to 6

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EXERCISE 05
SLEEPER STRETCH

Works: Infraspinatus, teres minor · felt in the outer upper back, behind the shoulder

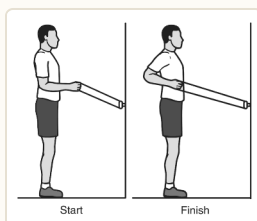
- ♦ Lie on your side on a firm, flat surface with the affected shoulder under you and your arm bent, as shown. A pillow under your head is fine
- ♦ Use your unaffected arm to push your other arm down; stop when you feel a stretch at the back of the affected shoulder
- ♦ Hold for 30 seconds, then relax your arm for 30 seconds

TIP Do not bend your wrist or press down on your wrist.

REPETITIONS

4 reps, 3× a day

DAYS PER WEEK

Daily
STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

EXERCISE 06
STANDING ROW

Works: Middle and lower trapezius · felt at the back of the shoulder and into the upper back

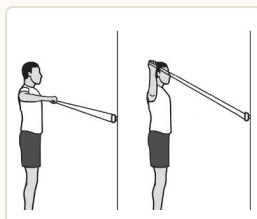
- ♦ Make a 3-foot loop with the elastic band, tie the ends together and attach the loop to a doorknob or other stable object
- ♦ Stand holding the band with your elbow bent and at your side
- ♦ Keep your arm close to your side and slowly pull your elbow straight back, then slowly return
- ♦ **Equipment:** an elastic stretch band of comfortable resistance. As the exercise becomes easier, progress to 3 sets of 12 repetitions

TIP Squeeze your shoulder blades together as you pull.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 07
EXTERNAL ROTATION WITH ARM ABDUCTED 90°

Works: Infraspinatus, teres minor · felt at the back of the shoulder and into the upper back

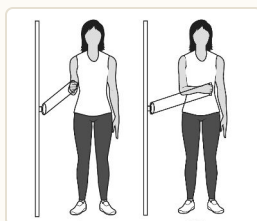
- ♦ Attach a 3-foot loop of elastic band to a doorknob or other stable object
- ♦ Stand holding the band with your elbow bent 90° and raised to shoulder height
- ♦ Keeping your shoulder and elbow level, slowly raise your hand until it is in line with your head, then slowly return
- ♦ **Equipment:** an elastic stretch band of comfortable resistance. As the exercise becomes easier, progress to 3 sets of 12 repetitions

TIP Make sure your elbow stays in line with your shoulder.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 08
INTERNAL ROTATION

Works: Pectoralis, subscapularis · felt at the chest and shoulder

- ♦ Attach a 3-foot loop of elastic band to a doorknob or other stable object
- ♦ Stand holding the band with your elbow bent and at your side
- ♦ Keep your elbow close to your side and bring your arm across your body, then slowly return
- ♦ **Equipment:** an elastic stretch band of comfortable resistance. As the exercise becomes easier, progress to 3 sets of 12 repetitions

TIP Keep your elbow pressed into your side.

REPETITIONS

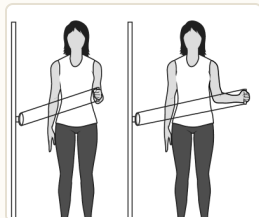
3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

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EXERCISE 09
EXTERNAL ROTATION

Works: Infraspinatus, teres minor, posterior deltoid · felt in the back of the shoulder and upper back

- ◆ Attach a 3-foot loop of elastic band to a doorknob or other stable object
- ◆ Stand holding the band with your elbow bent and at your side
- ◆ Keeping your elbow close to your side, slowly rotate your arm outward, then slowly return
- ◆ **Equipment:** an elastic stretch band of comfortable resistance. As the exercise becomes easier, progress to 3 sets of 12 repetitions

TIP Squeeze your shoulder blades together when you pull your elbow back.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 10
ELBOW FLEXION

Works: Biceps · felt at the front of the upper arm

- ◆ Stand tall with your weight evenly distributed over both feet
- ◆ Keep your elbow close to your side and slowly bring the weight up toward your shoulder
- ◆ Hold for 2 seconds, then slowly return to the starting position. Repeat
- ◆ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 3 sets of 8 repetitions and progress to 3 sets of 12. Add weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds, restarting at 3 sets of 8 each time

TIP Do not do the exercise too quickly or swing your arm.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 11
ELBOW EXTENSION

Works: Triceps · felt at the back of the upper arm

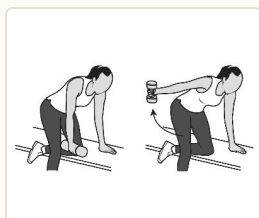
- ◆ Stand tall with your weight evenly distributed over both feet
- ◆ Raise your arm and bend your elbow with the weight behind your head, supporting your arm with your opposite hand on your upper arm
- ◆ Slowly straighten your elbow and bring the weight overhead, hold 2 seconds, then slowly lower
- ◆ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 3 sets of 8 repetitions and progress to 3 sets of 12. Add weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds, restarting at 3 sets of 8 each time

TIP Keep your abdominal muscles tight and do not arch your back.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 12
TRAPEZIUS STRENGTHENING

Works: Middle and posterior deltoid, supraspinatus, middle trapezius · felt at the back of the shoulder and into the upper back

- ◆ Place your knee on a bench or chair and lean forward so that your hand reaches the bench and helps support your weight; the other hand is at your side, palm facing your body
- ◆ Slowly raise your arm, rotating your hand to a thumbs-up position, stopping when your hand is at shoulder height and your arm is parallel to the floor
- ◆ Slowly lower your arm to the original position to a count of 5
- ◆ **Equipment:** begin light enough for 3 to 4 sets of 20 without pain; as it becomes easier add 2 to 3 pounds and do fewer repetitions, to a maximum of about 5 to 7 pounds

TIP Use a weight that makes the last few repetitions difficult, but pain-free.

REPETITIONS

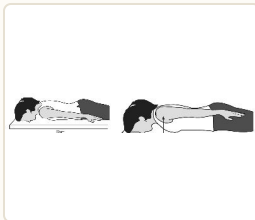
3 sets of 20

DAYS PER WEEK

3 to 5

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EXERCISE 13

SCAPULA SETTING

Works: Middle trapezius, serratus · felt in the upper back, at the shoulder blade

- ♦ Lie on your stomach with your arms by your sides; a pillow under your forehead is fine
- ♦ Gently draw your shoulder blades together and down your back as far as possible
- ♦ Ease about halfway off from this position and hold for 10 seconds; relax and repeat 10 times

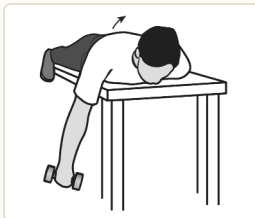
TIP Do not tense up in your neck.

REPETITIONS

10

DAYS PER WEEK

3



EXERCISE 14

SCAPULAR RETRACTION / PROTRACTION

Works: Middle trapezius, serratus · felt in the upper back at the shoulder blade

- ♦ Lie on your stomach on a table or bed with your injured arm hanging over the side
- ♦ Keep your elbow straight and lift the weight slowly by squeezing your shoulder blade toward the opposite side as far as possible
- ♦ Return slowly to the starting position and repeat
- ♦ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 2 sets of 8 to 10 repetitions and progress to 3 sets of 15, adding weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds

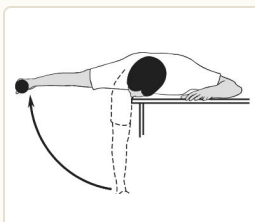
TIP Do not shrug your shoulder toward your ear.

REPETITIONS

2 sets of 10

DAYS PER WEEK

3



EXERCISE 15

BENT-OVER HORIZONTAL ABDUCTION

Works: Middle and lower trapezius, infraspinatus, teres minor, posterior deltoid · felt at the back of the shoulder and into the upper back

- ♦ Lie on your stomach on a table or bed with your injured arm hanging over the side
- ♦ Keep your arm straight and slowly raise it up to eye level
- ♦ Slowly lower it back to the starting position and repeat
- ♦ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 3 sets of 8 repetitions and progress to 3 sets of 12. Add weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds, restarting at 3 sets of 8 each time

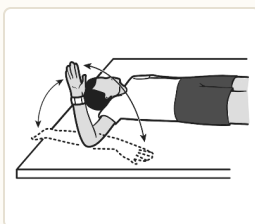
TIP Control the movement as you lower the weight.

REPETITIONS

3 sets of 8

DAYS PER WEEK

3



EXERCISE 16

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ROTATION

Works: Anterior and posterior deltoid, pectoralis, subscapularis, latissimus, infraspinatus, teres minor · felt in the front and back of the shoulder, the chest and the upper back

- ♦ Lie on your back on a flat surface
- ♦ Extend your arm straight out from the shoulder and bend the elbow 90° so that your fingers point up
- ♦ Keeping your elbow bent and on the floor, slowly move your arm through the arc shown. Bring your elbow down to a 45° angle if you have pain at 90°
- ♦ **Equipment:** begin light enough for 3 to 4 sets of 20 without pain; as it becomes easier add 2 to 3 pounds and do fewer repetitions, to a maximum of about 5 to 7 pounds

TIP Use a weight that makes the last few repetitions difficult, but pain-free.

REPETITIONS

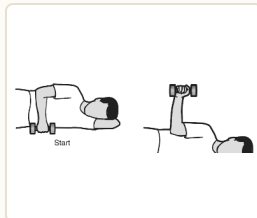
3 to 4 sets of 20

DAYS PER WEEK

3 to 5

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EXERCISE 17
EXTERNAL ROTATION — SIDELYING

Works: Infraspinatus, teres minor, posterior deltoid · felt in the back of the shoulder and upper back

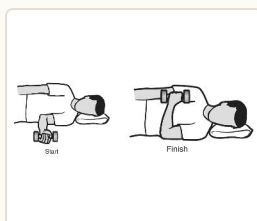
- ♦ Lie on your side on a firm, flat surface with your unaffected arm under you, cradling your head
- ♦ Hold your injured arm against your side with the elbow bent 90°
- ♦ Keep your elbow against your side and slowly rotate the arm at the shoulder, raising the weight to vertical; lower to the starting position to a count of 5
- ♦ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 2 sets of 8 to 10 repetitions (about 1 to 2 pounds). Add weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds

TIP Do not let your body roll back as you raise the weight.

REPETITIONS

2 sets of 10

DAYS PER WEEK

3

EXERCISE 18
INTERNAL ROTATION — SIDELYING

Works: Subscapularis, teres major · felt in the front of the shoulder

- ♦ Lie on a firm, flat surface on the side of your affected arm, with a pillow or folded cloth under your head to keep your spine straight
- ♦ Hold your injured arm against your side with the elbow bent 90°
- ♦ Keep your elbow bent and against your body and slowly rotate the arm at the shoulder, raising the weight to vertical; then slowly lower
- ♦ **Equipment:** begin with a weight that allows 2 sets of 8 to 10 repetitions (about 1 to 2 pounds). Add weight in 1-pound increments to a maximum of 5 pounds

TIP Do not let your body roll back as you raise the weight.

REPETITIONS

2 sets of 10

DAYS PER WEEK

3

Adapted from the *Rotator Cuff and Shoulder Conditioning Program*, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons / OrthoInfo (2017). The AAOS does not endorse any treatments, procedures, products or physicians; this material is provided as an educational service and is not a substitute for the advice of your own orthopaedic surgeon.

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