

Rotator Cuff Prevention Program

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Basic Principles

- Rotator cuff exercises should be completed with light weight or resistance. Technique and form are more important than weight.
- The rotator cuff exercises can be used as a warm up before weights.
- Try to perform 20 repetitions and 2 sets of each exercise.
- There are 15 exercises to be performed over three days.
- Perform the first 5 exercises on day 1, perform the second 5 exercises on day 2 and perform the final 5 on day 3. Alternate the three days and perform your exercises 3 times a week .
- Do NOT perform an exercise that causes pain during or after the routine.

How to “Set” the Shoulder Blades

- When performing your rotator cuff exercises, the shoulder blade (scapular) muscles must be activated properly.
- The shoulder blade and its surrounding muscles provide the solid base for your rotator cuff and shoulder muscles. Appropriate activation of the shoulder blade muscles will also prevent impingement.
- When we “set” our shoulder blade muscles, it only requires a light contraction of about 20% effort.
- To appropriately “set” your shoulder blades think about sticking your shoulder blades to your rib cage (serratus muscle activation) and then a slight retraction and upward rotation of the shoulder blade.
- Do not excessively retract or pull your shoulder blades backwards since this can promote downward rotation of the shoulder blades. Downward rotation of our shoulder blades can increase the risk of impingement.
- The “set” of your shoulder blades is a subtle movement and ask one of the team therapists for help if needed.



Example of shoulder blade set:



Improper posture with
shoulders rolled forward



Appropriate shoulder blade
set with upward rotated scapula

Day 1: Field Goal

- Lie face down on a bench with your forehead supported. Bring your shoulders to 90 degrees, bend your elbows and set your shoulder blades. Begin with your finger tips facing the ground and then lift your hands to be in line with the ear making a “field goal” position. Return to the start position and repeat.



Day 1: Tree Hugger

- Standing with one foot slightly forward. Have tube secured behind you and hold one end in each hand. Using the tubing as resistance act as if you are hugging a tree. Let the shoulder blades come around the chest wall without elevating them (i.e. shoulders should not be riding up towards your ears).



Day 1: Robot Punch

- Using the tubing as resistance lock your elbows out and punch fists forward in a slow and controlled manner. Let the shoulder blades come around the chest wall. Do not let them wing out when you are coming back to the start position.



Day 1: Skimming Water

- Lie face down on a bench or floor with your forehead supported and your arms by your side. Set your shoulder blades and point your thumbs upwards. ‘Skim’ your hands along the floor until both hands touch. Return your arms to the starting position with the same arm pattern. Begin with 2 sets of 5 reps.



Day 1: Shoulder 90/90's

- Lie on the floor. Bring shoulder into 90 degree position from your side (i.e. right angle, open armpit). Towel placed under elbow. Use a small weight, bend elbow to 90 degree angle. Rotate shoulder through internal and external rotation. Focus on control of the shoulder and shoulder blade.



Day 2: Wobble board or Ball Push up with a plus

Begin in a push up position with your hands on a ball or wobble board. Perform a push up. At the end or top of each push up, add a “plus”. The “plus” movement is a rounding of your back (think about your shoulder blades sliding forward around the rib cage). The “plus” part of the exercise helps to activate a key muscle that stabilizes your shoulder blade called the serratus anterior muscle.



Day 2: External Rotation at 90 degrees

- Stand and hold tubing, pulley or weight in front of you. Lift your shoulder outwards to 90 degrees and have your elbows bent at right angles. Keep your elbow slightly forward of your shoulder. In this position set your shoulder blades and then externally rotate your shoulder or move your hand upwards. Remember to keep your elbow in the same position as you move up and down.



Day 2: Internal Rotation at 90 degrees

- Stand and use tubing (or pulleys) that is fixed behind you. Lift your shoulders outwards to 90 degrees and have your elbows bent at right angles. Keep your elbow slightly forward of your shoulder. In this position set your shoulder blades and then internally rotate your shoulder or move your hand down. Remember to keep your elbow in the same position as you move up and down.



Day 2: Hardcore Superman's

- On your hands and knees. Tubing tied around right thigh and connected and tied to the left foot. Tube tied around right thigh and the other end held by the right hand. Tighten core. Extend left hip and right shoulder (arm) against the resistance of the tubing



Day 3: Staying Alive (PNF external)

- Stand and use tubing, pulleys or weights fixed below your waist. Begin with your palm facing your opposite hip and set your shoulder blades. Move your arm in an outward and upward movement to a position where the palm of your hand faces forward. This is a similar movement to the “staying alive” dance.



Day 3: PNF Internal

- Stand and use tubing (or pulleys) that is fixed above your shoulder. Begin with your arm lifted in an upwards position, and your palm facing outwards. Set your shoulder blades and move your arm in a downward and inward movement to a position where the palm of your hand reaches the opposite hip. This is the opposite movement to the staying “staying alive” exercise.



Day 3: Eccentric Biceps

- Stand with a weight in one hand with your arm at your side. The other arm is held straight out in front of you (90 degrees of shoulder flexion). Keep your elbows straight, set your shoulder blades and then lift the weight upwards and pass it to the other hand. The weight is then lowered with your opposite arm slowly to your side (eccentric contraction). Repeat the motion with the arm now holding the weight.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



Day 3: Elbow at side: External Rotation

- Stand and use tubing (or pulleys) fixed at the height of your hip and have your elbow tucked into your side. The elbow is bent at 90 degrees and your palm faces your stomach. Set the shoulder blades and then externally or outward rotate your arm, and then return it to the start position. (You can put a towel between your arm and body as a reminder to keep the elbow connected to your trunk as you move.)



Day 3: Biceps Curl

- Stand and use tubing (or pulleys) that is fixed at the height of your shoulder. Begin with your arm held outwards to 90 degrees and your elbow should be slightly ahead of your shoulder. Set your shoulder blades and perform a biceps curl and then return to the starting position.



Day 3: Small Bear, Big Bear

- Ball Squat Position with theraball between the mid back area and the wall. Tubing tied on each foot and held with the opposite hand. At full squat position ensure your wrists are crossed. When you are coming back into the standing position elevate your shoulders against the resistance of the tubing.

