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Strengthening

The shoulder joint has little stability provided by the bones in the joint. Therefore, it relies primarily on muscle and soft tissue strength to provide its stability. Weakness in the muscles or soft tissue can result from injury or overuse and can lead to pain and further injury.

Treatment of shoulder instability or weakness usually focuses on strengthening the rotator cuff muscles which keep the ball of the shoulder joint properly positioned in the socket. Additionally, weaknesses in the muscles that control shoulder blade movement should be addressed as this is an important component of shoulder function.

In addition to strengthening the shoulder, there are other important aspects of treating shoulder pain or instability. Resting the shoulder is important, but this doesn't mean that you shouldn't use it. Rest your shoulder from motions which cause pain or make the shoulder feel like it will "pop out". This is important to allow inflammation in the shoulder to subside. In addition, ice and anti-inflammatories can also help to reduce inflammation. You should always ice your shoulder after performing the exercises in this handout. The ice should be applied for 20-30 minutes following activity. Pain relievers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen can also be taken, but the doses should never exceed that recommended by your doctor.

Strengthening Exercises:

Internal Rotation:

This exercise can be performed using either a theraband (or similar exercise band) or a small dumbbell or weight. Figure 1 shows the use of a theraband to strengthen the internal rotators. Keeping the upper arm next to your body, bend the elbow 90 degrees and grip the theraband in your hand. Still keeping the upper arm next to your body, rotate the arm in toward your stomach, pulling the theraband in as shown in the picture. An alternate exercise using weights is shown in figure 2. Lying on the same side as the painful shoulder, keep your upper arm next to your body and your elbow bent to 90 degrees. With a weight in your hand, rotate the arm in toward your stomach as shown in the picture.

Do _____ sets of _____ repetitions.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

External Rotation:

External Rotation is the opposite of internal rotation and is done by performing the opposite action. Like internal rotation, external rotation can be done using either a thera-band (or other exercise band) or small dumbbells or weights. Figure 3 shows the use of a thera-band to strengthen the external rotators. Keeping the upper arm next to your body, bend the elbow 90 degrees and grip the thera-band in your hand. Still keeping the upper arm next to your body, rotate the arm out away from your stomach, pulling the thera-band out as shown in the picture. An alternate exercise using weights is shown in figure 4. Lying on the opposite side from the painful shoulder, keep your upper arm next to your body and your elbow bent to 90 degrees. With a weight in your hand, rotate the arm out away from your stomach as shown in the picture. Do _____ sets of _____ repetitions.

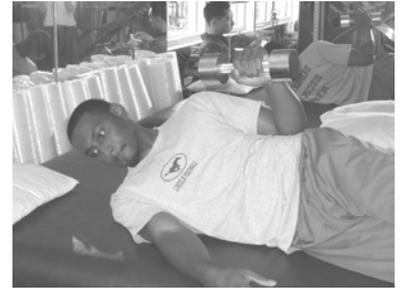


Figure 4

The shoulder blade is an important component of proper should function. It is important to strengthen the muscles around the shoulder blade to ensure its proper motion.

Press Plus:

Lying on your back, hold a dumbbell and point your arm toward the ceiling. Lift your shoulder blade off the table, reaching farther toward the ceiling, as shown in Figure 5. Do _____ sets of _____ repetitions.



Figure 5



Figure 6

Shoulder Shrugs:

As shown in Figure 6, stand up straight, holding a small dumbbell or weight in the hand of the shoulder that is painful. Shrug your shoulder, concentrating on lifting the tip of the shoulder. Shrug your shoulder as high as it will go and do _____ sets of _____ repetitions of this exercise.

In addition, rowing exercises are also helpful for strengthening the shoulder blade muscles. These are done by bringing the arms back behind you, pinching the shoulder blades together in the back. Some gyms have rowing machines on which this exercise can be done. It can also be done with a thera-band or weights.