

Rotator Cuff Syndrome



Scan this QR Code to access a detailed video that enhances the information in this handout. It includes step by step guidance and visual demonstrations for each exercise.

What is rotator cuff syndrome?

Rotator cuff syndrome describes a range of conditions affecting the rotator cuff including tendonitis, bursitis, impingement syndrome, tendinopathy, and tears. Symptoms include shoulder pain usually worse with overhead activities, shoulder weakness, reduced range of motion, and pain that may interfere with sleep.

How is it treated?

Reduce training intensity and physical activity. Anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen can help alleviate pain. A rehabilitation program emphasizing strength, mobility, and balance around the shoulder is crucial to recovery. Prevention includes proper technique during activities and avoiding repetitive overhead motions that could strain the rotator cuff.

How long is the recovery?

Recovery time depends on severity. Symptoms often improve within a few weeks of starting treatment. However, full recovery, particularly for chronic or severe cases, can take several months.

Resuming sports or activities should be gradual and based on pain tolerance. Avoid symptom triggering activities until pain is well-managed. Begin with light weight exercises and gradually increase intensity.



Rotator Cuff Syndrome Rehabilitation Exercises

Consistent rehabilitation is the key to accelerating your recovery and preventing future injuries. Perform the following strengthening program 2–3 times per week for 6–8 weeks. After this initial phase, continue doing these exercises just once a week to maintain your shoulder health and protect your progress.

Active Shoulder Warm Up

Arm Swings

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Swing your arms forward, crossing them in front of your body, then swing them back while squeezing your shoulder blades together. Continue alternating between crossing your arms in front and opening them wide.
- Do this 10 times.



Shoulder Roll Forward

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Keep your arms relaxed at your side. Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders forward making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



Shoulder Roll Backward

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Keep your arms relaxed at your side. Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders backwards making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



Scapular Squeezes

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Start with your arms at your side. Pull your shoulder blades towards each other and squeeze for 1-2 seconds before returning to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



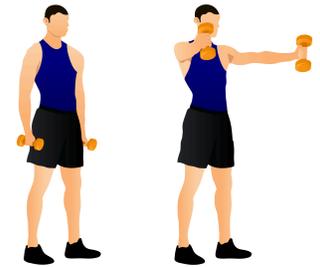
How to Perform Your Strengthening Exercises

Go SLOW: Perform every movement with control—take 3 seconds to lift the weight, hold for 1 second, and take 3 seconds to lower it. This "Heavy Slow Resistance" approach is scientifically proven to heal tendon injuries. Moving slowly physically thickens the tendon and improves its ability to handle weight, leading to much better long-term strength than fast, rushed exercises.

The 8-10 Progression Rule: Start with a weight you can lift for 3 sets of 8 reps (mild pain up to 4/10 is acceptable and safe). Each time you do this workout, try to add 1 repetition per set if your shoulder tolerates it. Once you successfully work up to 3 sets of 10 reps, increase your weight slightly and drop back down to 8 reps. By repeating this cycle, you will safely increase your weight every 1 to 2 weeks to keep building strength!

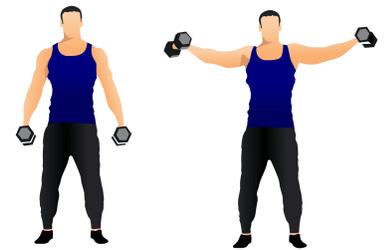
Scaption

- Objective: strengthen supraspinatus and deltoid
- Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Hold a dumbbell or resistance band and slowly lift upwards about 30-45 degrees in front of the body. Raise the weights until at shoulder level, pause briefly at the top, and then gradually lower to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Shoulder Lateral Raise

- Objective: strengthen deltoid and rotator cuff
- Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Hold a dumbbell or resistance band and slowly lift them out to the sides. Raise the weights until at shoulder level, pause briefly at the top, and then gradually lower to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Shoulder External Rotation

- Objective: strengthen the rotator cuff, especially the infraspinatus and teres minor muscles
- Lie down on your unaffected shoulder. Bend your elbow to 90 degrees. Keep the elbow pressed to your side and raise the dumbbell or resistance band by rotating the shoulder outwards. Pause at the top and then gradually lower to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



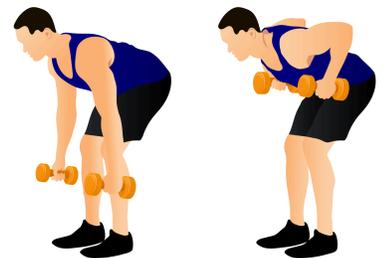
Shoulder Internal Rotation

- Objective: strengthen the rotator cuff, especially the subscapularis muscle
- Lie on your affected shoulder. Bend the elbow to 90 degrees. While keeping the elbow close to your body, raise the dumbbell or resistance band by rotating the shoulder inwards. Pause briefly at the top and then gradually lower to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Dumbbell rows

- Objective: strengthen the latissimus dorsi, rhomboids, and trapezius muscles
- Hinge at the hips with a flat back, knees slightly bent. Pull the dumbbells toward your ribcage by retracting your shoulder blades and bending your elbows, then slowly lower the weights back to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Bent Over Reverse Fly

- Objective: strengthen the upper back and posterior shoulder
- Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Slightly bend your knee and hinge at the hips so that your back is straight and almost parallel to the floor. Raise your arms straight out to the side until they are in line with your shoulders. Hold briefly at the top and then gradually lower to the starting position.
- Perform 3 sets of 8-10 repetitions.



Shoulder Stretches should be done daily to improve mobility.

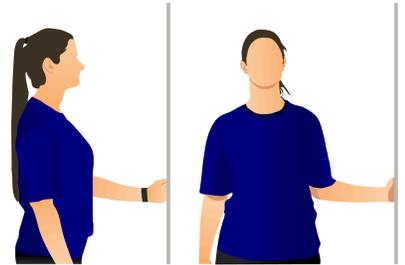
Anterior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of chest and anterior shoulder
- Clasp your hands behind your back and lift backwards and upwards. Pull your shoulders back to deepen the stretch.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



External Rotation Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of external rotators
- Stand at a doorway or use the edge of a desk or counter. Place the inside of your forearm against the hard surface. Gently lean your body away until you feel a stretch in the outer back shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Posterior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of posterior shoulder
- Bring your arm across your chest and bend at the elbow. Use your other hand to press the arm closer to your chest. You should feel a stretch in the back of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Inferior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of the inferior capsule of the shoulder
- Lift your arm overhead and bend at the elbow. Use your other hand to press downwards. You should feel a stretch at the bottom of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Internal Rotation Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility for internal rotation
- Hold a towel or belt in one hand behind your back. Grab onto it with the hand of your affected shoulder. Gently pull upwards with the top hand which will in turn lift the bottom hand higher up the back. You should feel a stretch in the lower front of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.

