

Home Exercises for Painful Shoulders

Shoulder problems can be extremely painful and rapidly result in stiff, weak joints through lack of normal movement. These simple exercises can be done at home. They will speed up your recovery and reduce the need for extensive physiotherapy to recover range of motion and strength. Start them as soon as possible after injury.

4 Important Exercises to Recover Range of Motion

Two of the exercises are lying down. This eliminates gravity. Take a moment to relax as much as you can. Cradle the injured arm with the good arm. The secret is not to move the muscles in the sore arm and let the good arm do the work. This takes a bit of practice.

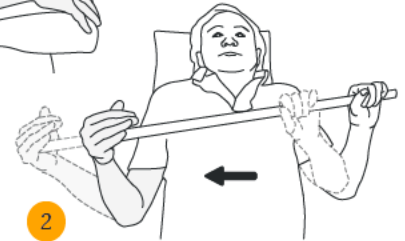
1. Passive assisted forward flexion

- Gradually elevate the arm forward and overhead. The target is to get the arm eventually to the level of the ear.
- Once you are comfortable doing this exercise lying down, you can do it standing up.



2. Passive assisted external rotation

- Keep the elbow at a right angle and at the side.
- Obtain a 3 foot length dowel or broomstick and grasp it gently with both hands. Let the good arm gently push the sore arm to the side.



Two exercises are done standing up. Once again, don't let the sore arm try to do the movement. Make sure it is fully relaxed and let the good arm do the work.

3. Passive assisted internal rotation

- Reach the sore arm behind your back as far as it can go.
- Then grasp your wrist with the good arm and gently pull the arm towards the midline and up the back.



4. Passive assisted adduction

- Use the good arm to stretch the sore arm across the chest, stretching out the back of the shoulder



Do not be afraid that you will do injury or damage doing these exercises. It is necessary to stretch into the painful zone a little bit. You will not recover full range of motion unless you push gently into the painful zone, increasing the range of motion each time you do it. Do your stretching exercises at least twice a day. Movement is good for the shoulder. Don't let it get stiff!

4 Important Exercises to Maintain Strength

A painful shoulder rapidly becomes weak. Maintaining strength will shorten your injury time. Obtain elastic tubing, or buy 6 or more feet of theraband elastic tape from your home medical supply store [e.g. Rexall drugs].

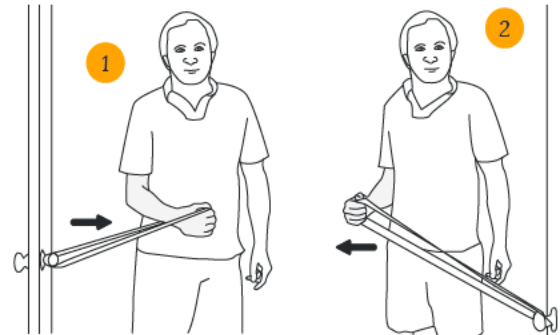
Two exercises are done by attaching the elastic tubing to a doorknob or other heavy object at the same level as the elbow. Keep the elbow tucked to the side. This rotates the shoulder and works the important rotator cuff muscles.

1. Internal rotation

- Pull the arm across the abdomen rotating the arm inwards.

2. External rotation

- Turn 180° and now pull the arm to the side against the elastic tubing, rotating the arm outwards.



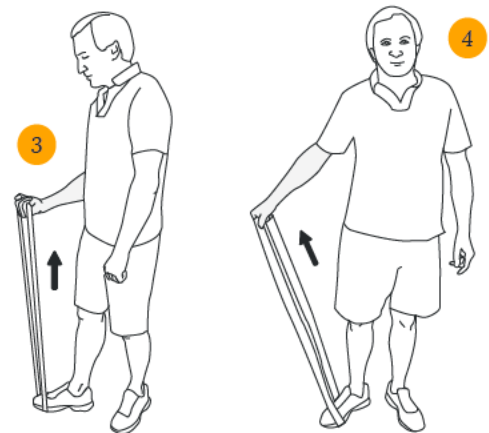
Two exercises are done by attaching the elastic tubing to your foot or an immovable object at floor level.

3. Biceps

- Keep the elbow at the side and flex the elbow upwards to strengthen the biceps muscle.

4. Deltoid

- Keep the elbow straight and lift the arm straight to the side, strengthening the deltoid. You can also do this exercise flexing the arm straight forward.



With all strengthening exercises make sure to stay in the pain-free zone of motion. Be very cautious about lifting the arm above a right angle. Strengthening exercises should be done once daily. There are many other more advanced exercises than these and your physiotherapist will be a good resource for expanding your program.

Sleeping Positions to Reduce Night Pain:

Cuddle a pillow under the arm to lift the arm away from the side. Also tuck one behind your back and shoulder to turn you slightly to the side comfortably.

A Useful Tip:

The water environment is magic for rehabilitation. Get into chest deep water in a swimming pool or hot tub, and let the buoyancy of the water assist you in doing all the mobility exercises, and move the arm against the resistance of the water to maintain strength.