

Rotator Cuff Impingement and Tendinopathy

Rotator Cuff Impingement and Tendinopathy are common shoulder injuries that cause pain and limit arm or shoulder movement. They can occur due to tendon inflammation (tendonitis) or when tendons and bursa get pinched during overhead arm movements (impingement). Diagnosis is based on clinical findings and can be confirmed with imaging.

Key Rehabilitation Points:

- **Avoid activities** that trigger pain until symptoms improve.
- **Maintain shoulder mobility** without causing further discomfort.
- **Taping, ergonomic adjustments, and posture correction** can aid in recovery.

Exercise Principles:

1. **Decrease muscle tightness** in the shoulder and pectorals through self-massage and stretching.
2. **Progressive eccentric loading** strengthens the tendons gradually, avoiding overloading or underloading.
3. **Gradually return to activity**, increasing intensity by 10% per week, as long as symptoms don't worsen.

Exercises are most effective when guided by a qualified professional, such as a physiotherapist, athletic therapist, or strength and conditioning coach. If you have any concerns, it's always a good idea to consult with an expert.

Level 1

Potential inclusion criteria:

- Pain at rest or with basic daily activities
- Unable to perform overhead activities
- Need to build tolerance to tissue loading prior to strengthening for 10 days.

Goals:

- Reduce pain and inflammation
- Optimize function throughout your day
- Activity modification to maximize rehabilitation but minimize inflammation/irritation

Requirement for progression:

- 10-14 days of diligent adherence to program
- Able to tolerate 3 sets of 8 reps with no pain or increase in symptoms

Aerobic Exercise:

You can continue to participate in cardiovascular exercise as tolerated. Focus on proper shoulder positioning and monitor pain and symptoms throughout

1. Shoulder Flexion AAROM | Full Range (Stick)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: 2-3 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture
- Hold the stick / cane in front of your hips as shown

Execution:

- Use your strong arm to help raise your affected arm forward and over your head
- Stop at the level causing pain. Feeling tightness or stretching is ok
- Return in a controlled manner to the original position



2. Shoulder Abduction AAROM | End Range (Stick)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: 2-3 x Daily

Preparation

- Stand with good posture.
- Hold the stick / cane in front of your hips as shown.

Execution

- Use your strong arm to help raise your affected arm out to the side.
- Raise overhead stopping at the level causing pain. Feeling tightness / stretching is ok
- Return in a controlled manner to the original position.



3. Shoulder External Rotation AAROM (Stick)

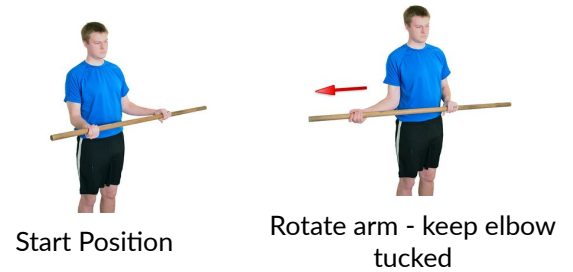
Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: 2-3x Daily

Preparation:

- Lie on your back, sit, or stand
- Hold a stick / cane as shown with elbows bent at 90 degrees

Execution:

- Use your strong arm to help rotate your weak arm away from your body
- Stop at the level causing pain. Feeling tightness / stretching is ok
- Keep your elbows bent and close against your sides at all times
- Return to the start position in a controlled manner



4. Shoulder Pendulum | Circles

Sets: 2-3 | Duration: 20 seconds | Frequency: 2-3 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand next to a counter or chair, using your strong arm to balance yourself
- Lean slightly forwards and let your weak arm dangle towards the floor

Execution:

- Sway your hips to get your arm moving in small circles



5. Shoulder Flexion Isometric | Elbow Bent

Sets: 2 | Reps: 8-12 | Hold: 5 Seconds | Frequency: 1-2 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand in front of a wall or doorframe, elbow bent as shown

Execution:

- Push your fist against the wall

Tip:

- Isometric means you are contracting your muscles but NOT moving your joint
- Use a pillow to avoid hurting your hand



6. Shoulder Extension Isometric | Elbow Bent

Sets: 2 | Reps: 8-12 | Frequency: 1-2 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand in front of a wall or doorframe, elbow bent as shown

Execution:

- Push elbow backward, against the wall

Tip:

- Isometric means you are contracting your muscles but NOT moving your joint
- Use a pillow to avoid hurting your elbow



Push elbow backward against wall

7. Shoulder Internal Rotation Isometric

Sets: 2 | Reps: 8-12 | Hold: 5 Seconds | Frequency: 1-2 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture facing a wall or doorframe
- Hold your arm by your side, elbow at 90 degrees, palm facing wall or doorframe

Execution:

- Rotate your hand inwards into the wall or doorframe
- Keep your elbow at your side

Tip:

- Isometric means you are contracting your muscles but NOT moving your joint



Rotate hand into doorframe

8. Shoulder External Rotation Isometric

Sets: 2 | Reps: 8-12 | Hold: 5 Seconds | Frequency: 1-2 x Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture facing a wall or doorframe
- Hold your arm by your side, elbow at 90 degrees, palm facing away from wall or doorframe

Execution:

- Rotate your hand outwards into the wall or doorframe
- Keep your elbow at your side

Tip:

- Isometric means you are contracting your muscles but NOT moving your joint



Rotate hand outward into doorframe

Level 2

When Can I Move To Level 2:

- Completed level 1
- Able to tolerate 3 sets of 8 reps without increase in pain or symptoms

Goals:

- Progress shoulder range of motion
- Increase tolerance to load and strengthening

Requirement for progression:

- Able to tolerate max sets and reps with no pain or increase in symptoms

Aerobic Exercise:

You can continue to participate in cardiovascular exercise as tolerated. Focus on proper shoulder positioning and monitor pain and symptoms throughout

1. Shoulder External Rotation Concentric | Neutral (Band)

Sets: 2-3

Reps: 8-15

Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Standing, elbow at 90 degrees
- Tuck a folded towel between your body and your elbow

Execution:

- Gently pull shoulder blades together
- Keeping elbow close to body, slowly rotate hand outward
- Return to start position



Start Position



Rotate hand outward

2. Shoulder Internal Rotation Concentric - Neutral (Band)

Sets: 2-3

Reps: 8-15

Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture
- Tuck a folded towel between your body and your elbow as shown

Execution:

- Keeping elbow close to body, rotate hand inward, toward your stomach
- Return to start position



Start Position



Rotate hand inward

3. Row | Bilateral + Neutral (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture, feet shoulder-width apart, one foot slightly in front

Execution:

- Using the muscles between your shoulder blades, pull you shoulder blades back and down
- At the same time perform a rowing motion keeping your elbows close to your body
- Return to the start position in a slow and controlled fashion



Start Position



Row against resistance

4. Shoulder ABC's on Wall (Ball)

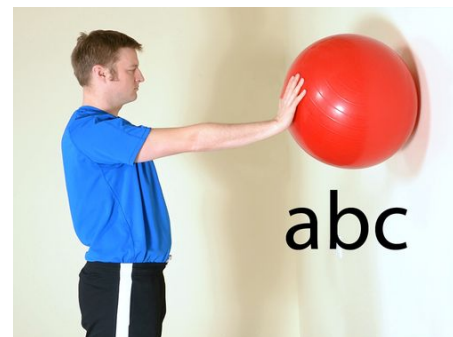
Sets: 2 | Reps: ABC's | Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture, hand on ball at shoulder height

Execution:

- Trace the letters of the alphabet on the ball
- Keep elbow straight



Trace the letters of the alphabet on the ball

5. Shoulder Slides (Band, Wall)

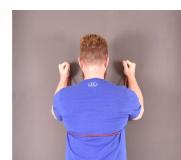
Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

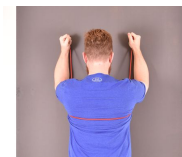
- Stand with both arms on the wall as shown
- Wrap a band around your back and hold it in your hands

Execution:

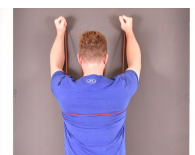
- Slide forearms up the wall
- Return to the start position



Start Position



Slide forearms up the wall



6. Shoulder Posterior Capsule Stretch (Wall)

Sets: 2-3 | Hold: 20-30 Seconds | Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Stand with your side to a wall
- Arm against the wall, as shown

Execution:

- Grasp your forearm with the opposite hand
- Turn your arm toward the floor



Stand beside a wall



Grasp forearm with opposite hand



Turn arm toward the floor



Go as far as you can

7. Posterior Shoulder Stretch

Sets: 2-3 | Hold: 20-30 Seconds | Frequency: Daily

Preparation:

- Sit or stand with good posture

Execution:

- Reach across your chest
- Use your other arm to pull a bit further



Head and eyes forward, belly button pulled in



Reach arm across body



Place opposite hand at elbow, gradually pull to stretch the back of your shoulder

Level 3

When Can I Move To Level 3:

- Completed level 2
- Able to tolerate max sets and reps without increase in pain or symptoms

Goals:

- Increase tolerance to load and strengthening

Aerobic Exercise:

You can continue to participate in cardiovascular exercise as tolerated. Focus on proper shoulder positioning and monitor pain and symptoms throughout

1. Shoulder External Rotation Concentric | 90° Abduction (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 |
Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture.
- Raise arm out to the side at shoulder height, elbow bent to 90 degrees

Execution:

- Keeping elbow stationary, rotate arm upward
- Return to start position.



Rotate arm upwards



Slowly lower down

2. Shoulder Internal Rotation Concentric | 90° Flexion (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 |
Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

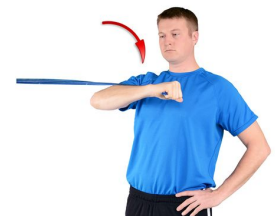
- Stand with good posture
- Raise arm straight ahead
- Bend elbow to 90 degrees (fingers are pointed towards the ceiling)

Execution:

- Keeping your elbow stationary in the air, rotate your arm downward against the resistance until your forearm is parallel with the floor
- Raise your arm to the start position



Arm straight ahead,
elbow bent



Rotate arm until forearm
is parallel with floor

3. A Row (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Stand tall, holding band

Execution:

- Row arms to the sides to make an 'A'
- Squeeze shoulder blades
- Do not lean backward



Start position



Row arms to the sides to make an 'A'

4. T Row (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Stand tall, holding band

Execution:

- Row arms to the sides to make a 'T'
- Squeeze shoulder blades
- Do not lean backward



Start Position



Row arms to the sides to make a 'T'

5. Y Row (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Stand tall, holding band

Execution:

- Row arms to the sides to make a 'Y'
- Squeeze shoulder blades
- Do not lean backward



Start position



Row arms to the side to make a 'Y'

6. Shoulder D1 Pattern - Ascending (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Stand with good posture holding band in hand
- Have your arm down at your side, rotated in, thumb pointed down

Execution

- Bring your arm and hand upward and across your body against resistance
- As you do so, rotate your hand outward
- Finish with you thumb pointed upward and your hand slightly above your head



Hand at side



Raise arm upward and across

7. Shoulder D2 Pattern - Ascending (Band)

Sets: 2-3 | Reps: 8-15 | Frequency: Alternate Days

Preparation:

- Start with your arm across your body with your hand rotated in, thumb pointed down

Execution:

- Bring your arm up and across your body diagonally
- As you do, rotate your hand outwards
- Finish with your hand above your head and out to the side



Arm across body

Raise arm up and out to the side

Return To Activity / Achieving Your #RISEABOVE Goal(s)

The return to activity and sport-specific training should be tailored to each individual, as recovery and progression will vary based on factors like the severity of symptoms, fitness level, and the demands of the sport. It's crucial to consult with experts, including a physiotherapist, coach, athletic therapist, or strength and conditioning coach, who can provide personalized guidance and ensure a safe and effective recovery plan.

Their expertise will help you progress at a pace that's right for you while minimizing the risk of reinjury and ensuring proper technique as you return to activity.