

SHOULDER REHAB

THE SHOULDER STRENGTH & CONTROL STARTER GUIDE

Restore options. Build capacity. Reach with confidence.

A practical educational guide to the strength, mobility and physical capacity that support comfortable movement.

01

KEEP IT MOVING

Use comfortable motion to maintain confidence and movement options.

02

BUILD CAPACITY

Train the rotator cuff, scapular muscles and upper extremity.

03

RETURN TO DEMAND

Progress toward reaching, lifting, work or sport tasks.

Inside: five starter exercises, coaching cues, progressions and a simple framework for building capacity.

WHY SHOULDER PAIN CAN HAPPEN

Pain is rarely explained by one factor. Symptoms can emerge when the demands placed on the region exceed what it is currently prepared to tolerate.

01	LOAD CHANGES New lifting, throwing, overhead work or training volume may exceed current capacity.
02	ROTATOR CUFF CAPACITY The cuff contributes to shoulder control across reaching and loading tasks.
03	SCAPULAR SUPPORT The shoulder blade and trunk provide a platform for arm movement.
04	MOBILITY Comfortable shoulder and thoracic motion help distribute movement demands.
05	RECOVERY & CONTEXT Sleep, stress, prior injury and fear of movement can influence symptoms and function.

KEY IDEA

The goal is not to avoid load forever. Find an appropriate starting point, monitor the response and progressively build capacity.

THE SHOULDER FOUNDATION

A useful rehabilitation plan considers the region as part of a larger movement system. These five areas provide a practical starting framework.

01	COMFORTABLE RANGE Maintains useful motion without repeatedly provoking symptoms.
02	ROTATOR CUFF Builds load tolerance and joint control.
03	SCAPULAR MUSCLES Supports reaching, pushing and pulling.
04	TRUNK & POSTURE OPTIONS Adds variability rather than forcing one “perfect” posture.
05	TASK-SPECIFIC LOAD Prepares for work, sport, lifting and overhead demands.

Exercise selection should be individualized based on symptoms, health history, goals and current capacity.

5 EXERCISES FOR SHOULDER PAIN

These are examples that may fit within a broader rehabilitation program. They are not a universal treatment protocol.

1. WALL SLIDE

Why: Comfortable elevation and scapular motion.

How: Place forearms on a wall and slide upward within a tolerable range without shrugging excessively.

Start: 2 sets of 8–10 reps.

2. EXTERNAL ROTATION ISOMETRIC

Why: Early rotator-cuff loading.

How: With elbow at your side, press the back of the hand outward into a wall or band without moving.

Start: 4–5 holds of 10–20 sec/side.

3. BAND ROW

Why: Scapular and posterior shoulder strength.

How: Pull elbows back while keeping ribs and neck relaxed, then return slowly.

Start: 2–3 sets of 8–12 reps.

4. SCAPTION

Why: Controlled arm elevation.

How: Raise light arms or weights slightly forward of your sides, stopping within a comfortable range.

Start: 2–3 sets of 6–10 reps.

5. WALL PUSH-UP PLUS

Why: Serratus and pressing capacity.

How: Perform a wall push-up, then gently push farther away so the shoulder blades wrap forward.

Start: 2–3 sets of 8–12 reps.

FEATURED EXERCISE: WALL SLIDE

This exercise offers a practical way to build controlled shoulder capacity. Use a comfortable range and appropriate starting level.

01	SET UP Place forearms on the wall with light pressure and relaxed shoulders.
02	SLIDE Move the arms upward through a comfortable range.
03	REACH Allow the shoulder blades to rotate naturally around the rib cage.
04	RETURN Lower slowly without forcing the shoulders down and back.

COACHING CUES

Move with control. Keep breathing. Use a range and resistance that feel manageable, and avoid forcing through sharp or escalating symptoms.

REGRESS	BASE	PROGRESS
Shorter range or one arm	Two-arm wall slide	Add band tension or lift away from wall

HOW TO PROGRESS

Progression should reflect the person in front of you—not simply the calendar. Advance one variable at a time and watch the response.

01	CONTROL Own the movement through a comfortable range and tempo.
02	VOLUME Gradually add repetitions, sets, hold time or total work.
03	RESISTANCE Add external load when the current level is well tolerated.
04	SPEED & COMPLEXITY Introduce faster or more complex movement when appropriate.
05	ACTIVITY-SPECIFIC DEMANDS Progress toward the work, recreation or sport demands that matter to you.

SIMPLE RESPONSE CHECK

Mild symptoms during exercise may be acceptable for some conditions if they remain manageable and return toward baseline afterward. A marked or lasting increase means the dose may need to change.

READY FOR A PLAN BUILT AROUND YOU?

ONLINE REHABILITATION CONSULTING | SPORTS MEDICINE | PERFORMANCE

Move beyond generic exercise lists.

Online rehabilitation consulting can help you understand your symptoms, choose an appropriate starting point, and build a progressive plan around your goals, equipment and schedule.

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WHEN TO SEEK PROMPT MEDICAL CARE

Seek appropriate care after major trauma or for severe or rapidly worsening pain, major swelling or deformity, inability to use the limb, fever or unexplained illness, new or progressive weakness, persistent numbness or tingling, loss of coordination, or other concerning symptoms.

EDUCATIONAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for individualized medical evaluation, diagnosis or treatment. Exercise selection and progression should be based on your health status, symptoms, history and goals. Consult a qualified healthcare professional before beginning a new exercise or rehabilitation program, particularly if you are currently experiencing pain or injury. Stop an exercise and seek appropriate guidance if symptoms are concerning or worsening. Online consultation availability and scope may depend on your location and individual needs.