



Greater Washington

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Simple shoulder exercises

One very powerful way of controlling your shoulder pain is to do daily range of motion exercises, putting your shoulder through full movement several times a day. This prevents stiffness developing and stretches all the attached muscles, making them less vulnerable to sudden demands.

Please note that exercises can make your pain worse as well as better so please consult the [simple exercise guidance](#) before getting on with them. If you have any doubts, please consult your physio, other manual therapist or medical practitioner.

These exercises are meant to help you regain loss of movement in the shoulder region and control pain. They are simple and not magical in any way. However, with regular performance, you should find your problems are improved. If you have long term shoulder pain with some disability these exercises may help mobility but may not be very effective against pain.

Do each movement slowly five times, resting a short time in between each set of movements. Do two or three times a day although more often can be useful. You can increase the numbers over time as you get more confident.

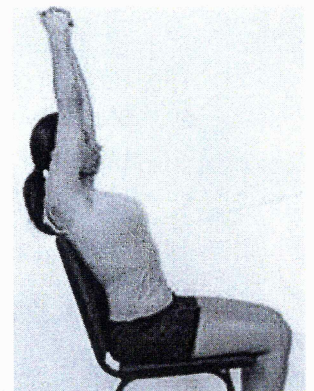
Pendular exercises

This technique is most useful post-operatively or if you have a painful problem.

NB Take the advice of your physical therapist if you have had a shoulder operation, as the exact types of exercise can be crucial to the success of your operation.

Lean well forward and lean on your good arm onto a low table or other support. Allow your affected arm to hang like a pendulum, without effort, and perform a backward and forward movement, moving your easily like a pendulum. A side to side movement and a stirring motion can also be performed in the same position.

Assisted flexion



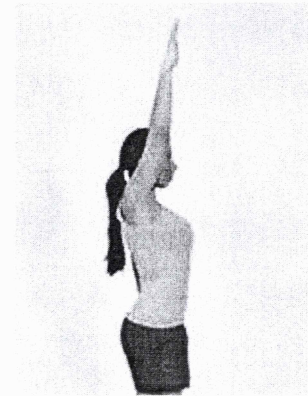
Assisted flexion allows you to get the shoulder range of movement going even though you don't yet have the power or pain control to do it with the one arm alone. The easiest way to start is to lie flat and clasp your hands together. Slowly lift your arms up, stretching them out away from you as you bring them gradually above your head if you can.

Don't force the movement as it may well be painful to some degree and pushing into the pain won't help. You can also do this exercise sitting up or standing, which increases the difficulty of the exercise.

Active Flexion

Lift your arm up straight in front of you. It can help to lift your arm slightly across your body as this fits the natural anatomical movement better.

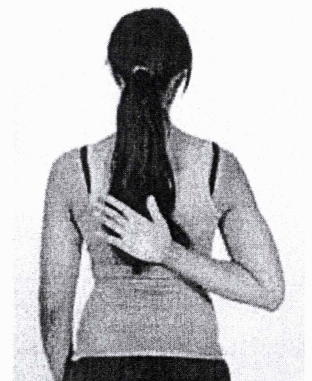
The socket of the shoulder joint faces inwards slightly so the slight movement across the body can be more comfortable and natural. Shoulder flexion is one of the most important of our shoulder movements as it enables us to put our hands in front of our eyes, which is the major function of our arms. You may not be able to get your arm up as far as our model can but this doesn't matter, get it up as far as you can and gradually increase with time.



Hand behind back (medial rotation)

Try and put your hand behind your back as far as you easily can. The distance we can get our hands round behind our backs varies enormously with how mobile or muscley we are. Getting our hand behind our back is a useful movement for normal functional activities such as tucking our trousers in or doing up a bra.

This movement is a combination of three anatomical shoulder movements, shoulder extension, medial rotation and shoulder adduction (moving the arm in towards the centre). Sometimes it's necessary to work on one or more of the individual movements if we are to improve the overall medial rotation movement.

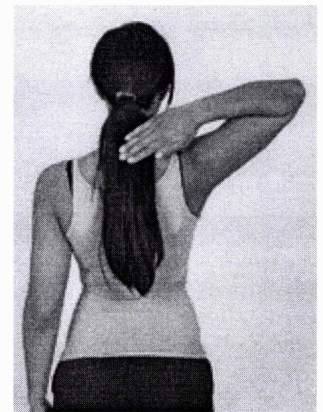


Hand behind neck (Lateral rotation)

Put your hand behind your neck, keeping your elbow out to the side.

This can be a difficult movement to do as it involves a lot of shoulder flexion too. If your shoulder is sore it might be hard to this and you could do the next movement instead.

When you can get your arm up properly you could add this exercise to the routine. It's very easy just to put your hand round the side of your neck and let your elbow come up in front of you. This avoids the stretch we are looking for in this exercise and, if you can, you should try and get your elbow out to the side as she is showing in the picture.



Lateral rotation (alterative method)

Often this is the easiest exercise to start with to work this important rotation component of shoulder movement. It's very easy to let your elbows stray from the body as you do it. Holding a small rolled-up towel between the upper arm and the ribcage can be a good way of avoiding this.

Stand with your elbow against your side, bent to 90 degrees and cross your tummy as if you were crossing your arms.

Keeping your elbow in position at your side and bent, turn your hand and forearm outwards as if you are sliding your forearms over a large table in front of you. She's kept her arms right against her body in this example.

There are loads of other exercises you can do for your shoulders, but skilled advice is needed so that they are suitable for your particular problem.

