

# Shoulder Pain: Tips and Exercises

## (Shoulder Impingement Syndrome)



There are many reasons why people have shoulder pain. Shoulder Impingement Syndrome is one cause of shoulder pain. When muscles, tendons, or bursae (fluid-filled sacs) become swollen or irritated in between the bony parts of the shoulder, pain results. You may feel the pain when you move your arm or sleep on the affected shoulder. Your physical therapist or doctor may call this “rotator cuff tendinitis” or “bursitis.” The rotator cuff is made up of four muscles that rotate and help raise the arm. With this condition, these muscles may become weak, and it may be difficult to lift your arm.

### What Causes Shoulder Pain?

#### Injury:

- A fall
- Severe blow to the shoulder
- Lifting something too heavy

#### Chronic Strains:

- Doing overhead work for many hours or days
- Sports movements such as weight lifting or throwing that you do many times
- Keeping the arm in one position for many hours such as during computer work
- Sleeping habits such as lying on the same arm each night
- Poor posture

*Remember to take regular breaks from activities you do over and over again.*

#### Don't...

- Work with arms overhead for more than a few minutes at a time.
- Lift heavy loads.
- Reach with the palm down.
- Support yourself on the painful shoulder.
- Carry your purse, backpack, or other items over one shoulder.

### Tips to Ease Your Symptoms

#### Apply Ice

To lessen pain and swelling, apply ice to the top and sides of your shoulder for 15 minutes, 3-4 times each day.



#### Sleeping Positions

- Sleep on your back or unaffected side.
- Rest your affected arm on a pillow.



#### Sitting Position

- Sit upright, keeping your head over your shoulders.
- Keep your shoulders back.
- Use a towel roll or lower back pillow to support your back.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or put them up on a foot stool.
- Try not to sit or stand with your shoulders rounded forward.



#### Do...

- Take regular breaks from activities you do over and over again.
- Lift and carry items close to your body.
- Point thumb up when reaching for something.
- Use a foot stool or ladder to reach overhead.



# Shoulder Pain: Tips and Exercises (page 2)

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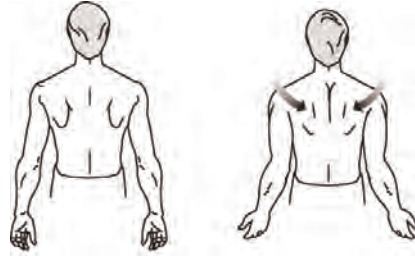
### Gentle Exercises

These exercises can help you to move better and lessen your shoulder pain.

#### 1. Shoulder Blade Setting

Start with arms relaxed at sides.

- Rotate palms forward, squeezing shoulder blades back and down.
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Slowly return to start position.



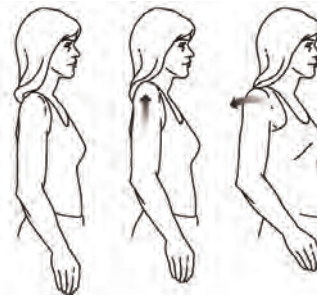
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#### 2. Shoulder Clock

Start with arms relaxed at sides. Picture the face of a clock on the side of your shoulder.

- Raise shoulders toward your ears (12 o'clock).
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Rotate shoulders back and down (9 o'clock).
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Slowly return to start position.



Frequency:

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#### 3. Pendulum

- Bend forward at the hips so that your arm hangs down freely.
- Rock your weight from the front to the back foot, allowing the arm to move in a circle, first clockwise then counter-clockwise.

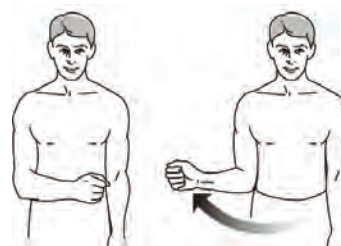


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#### 4. Rotate your Arm (Standing Outward Rotation)

- Place fist on stomach with the elbow bent.
- Set the shoulder blade (as in exercise #1).
- Rotate arm until fist faces forward, stopping short of pain.



Frequency:

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#### 5. Shoulder Stretch

- Place a towel roll high under your arm.
- Place the affected arm in front or in back of your body as instructed by your physical therapist or doctor.
- Grasp the wrist with the opposite hand.
- Gently pull the arm down and across body toward the opposite hip.
- Hold for 10 seconds.



Frequency:

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Consult with your physical therapist or doctor if you experience an increase in your symptoms with recommended exercises, or if you develop new symptoms of numbness, tingling or a spread of the pain. This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand name; any similar products may be used.