

Shoulder Surgery Exercise Guide

Regular exercises to restore motion and flexibility to your shoulder and a gradual return to your everyday activities are important for your full recovery after shoulder surgery.

Your orthopaedic surgeon and physical therapist may recommend that you exercise for 10 to 15 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day during your early recovery period. They may suggest some of the exercises included in this guide. They may also recommend additional exercises to help prevent stiffness in your elbow and hand.

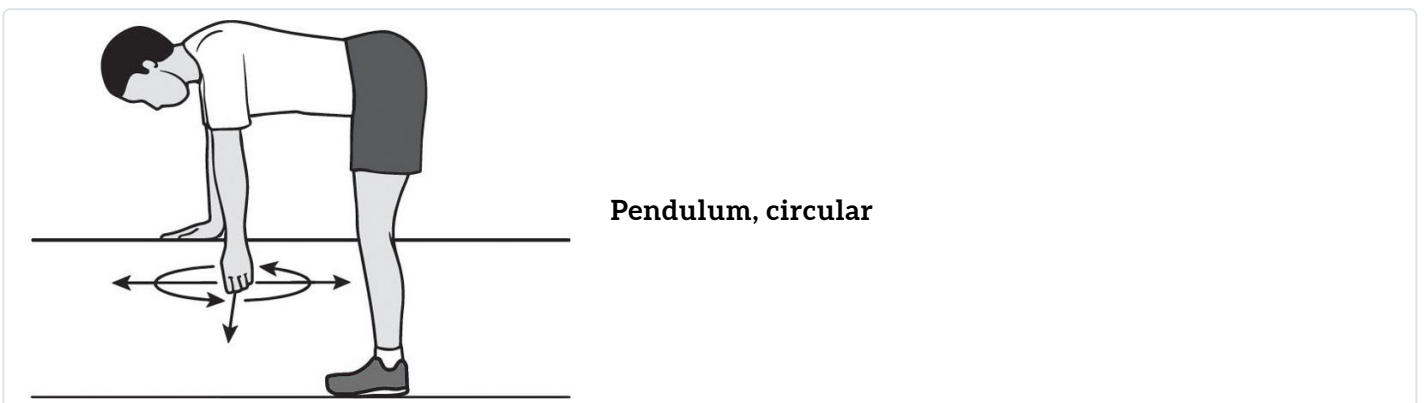
Check with your physical therapist or orthopaedic surgeon before performing any of the exercises shown below. In addition, remember to always use pain as your guide when exercising. Doing too much, too soon may delay healing.

Pendulum, Circular

Bend forward 90 degrees at the waist, placing your uninvolved hand on a table for support.

Rock body in a circular pattern to move arm clockwise 10 times, then counterclockwise 10 times. Keep your arm relaxed during the exercise. The circular pendular movement should occur through your shoulder joint.

Do 3 sessions a day.



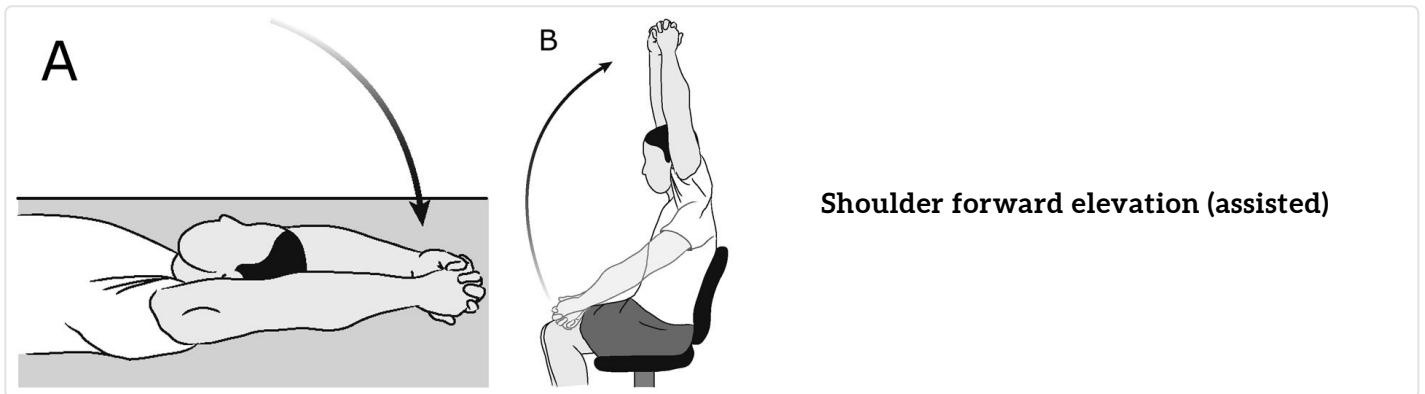
Shoulder Forward Elevation (Assisted)

This exercise can be done either lying down (A) or sitting down (B). Clasp hands together and lift arms above head. Keep your elbows as straight as possible. Maintain the elevation for 10-20 seconds, then slowly lower your arms.

Slowly increase the elevation of your arms as the days progress, using pain as your guide.

Repeat 10-20 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.



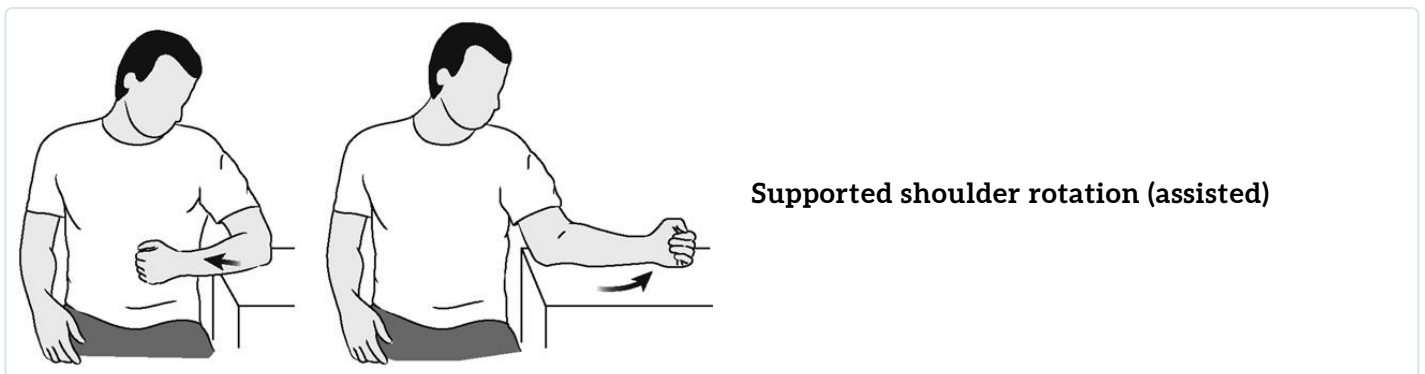
Supported Shoulder Rotation (Assisted)

Keep elbow in place and shoulder blades down and together. Slide forearm back and forth, as shown. You can also perform this exercise using a stick or cane to assist your arm outwards (keeping your elbow at your side).

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

Note: Your surgeon may restrict the degree of outward movement (external rotation) of your operated shoulder after surgery. Before performing this exercise, check with your surgeon or physical therapist to determine if you have an external rotation limit.

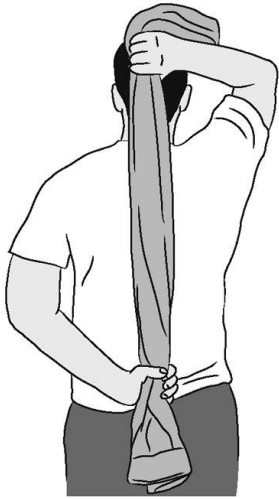


Shoulder Internal Rotation (Assisted)

Use your other hand or a towel to help bring your involved hand behind your back and across to the opposite side.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.



Shoulder internal rotation (assisted)

Walk Up Exercise (Active)

With elbow straight, use fingers to "crawl" up a wall or door frame as far as possible. Hold for 10-20 seconds.

Repeat 5-10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.



Walk up exercise (active)

Shoulder Forward Elevation (Active)

Raise arm upward to point to ceiling, keeping elbows straight and leading with your thumb, as shown. Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat 5-10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

Tip: Avoid hiking or bringing up your shoulder blade. It may be beneficial to watch yourself do this exercise in front of a mirror.



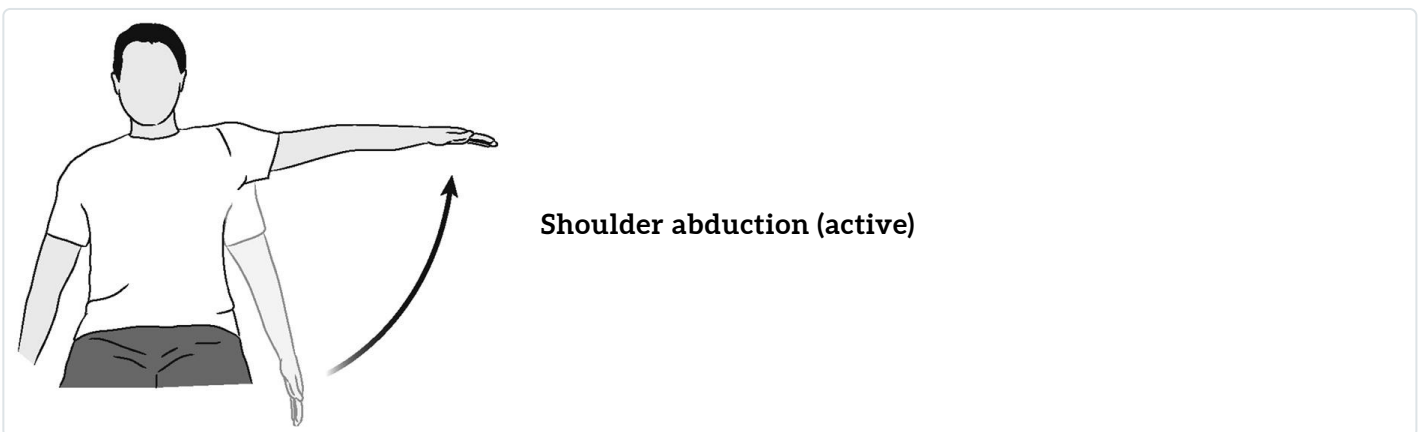
Shoulder Abduction (Active)

Raise arm out to side, with elbow straight and palm downward. Do not shrug your shoulder or tilt your trunk.

Repeat 3 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

Note: This exercise may not be recommended after certain surgeries. Check with your surgeon or physical therapist to ensure that it is appropriate for you.

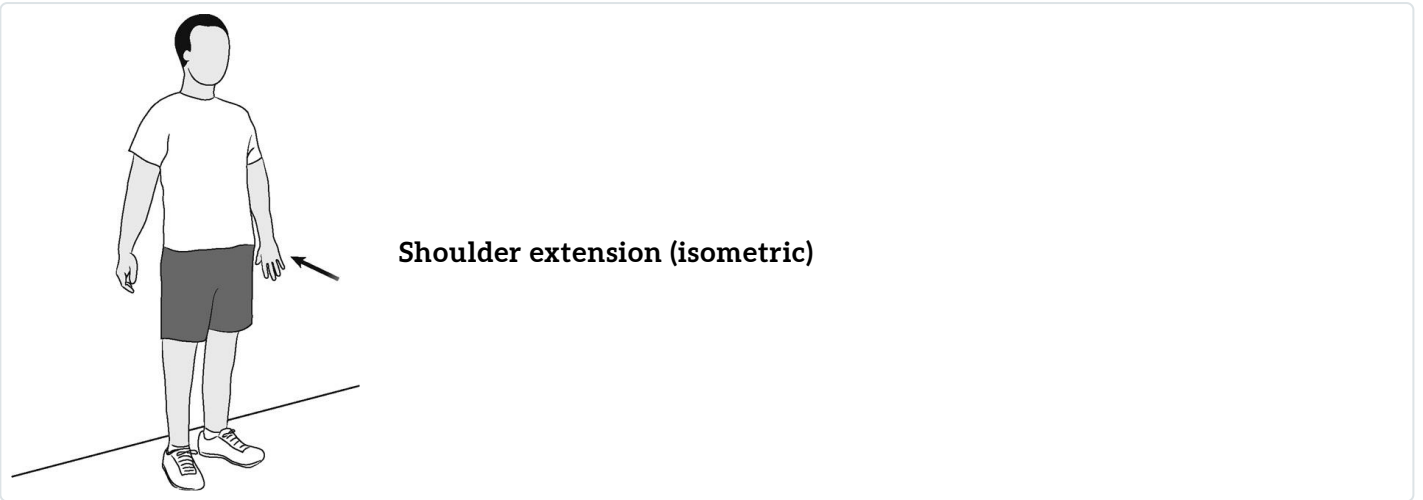


Shoulder Extension (Isometric)

Stand with your back against the wall and arms straight at your sides. Keeping your elbows straight, push your arms back into the wall. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax.

Repeat 5-10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

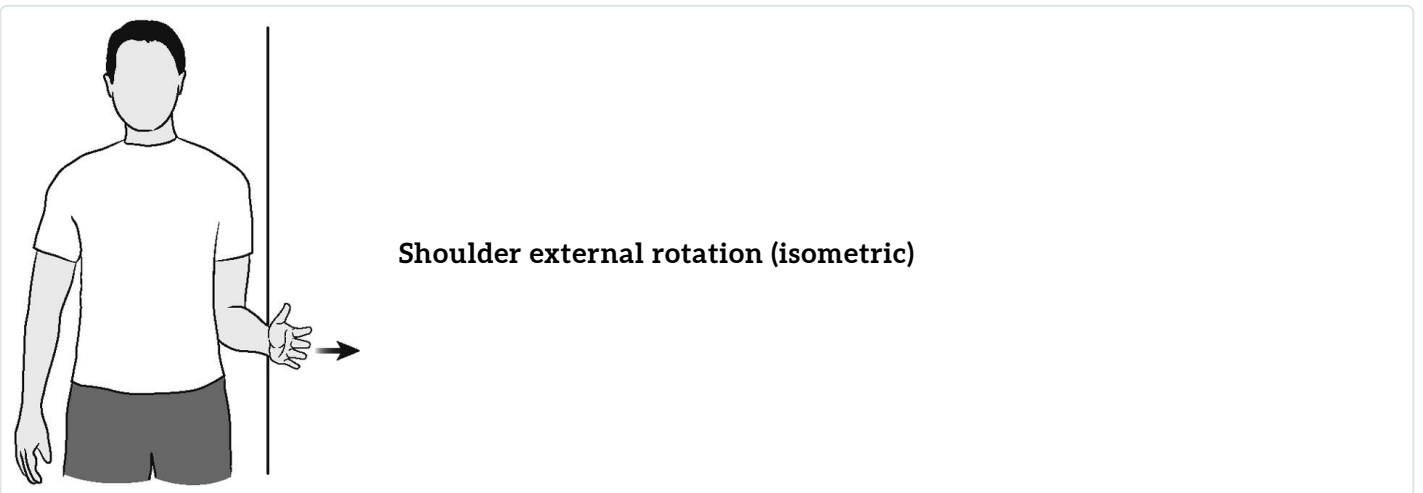


Shoulder External Rotation (Isometric)

Stand with the involved side of your body against a wall. Bend your elbow 90 degrees. Push the back of your hand slowly into the wall. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

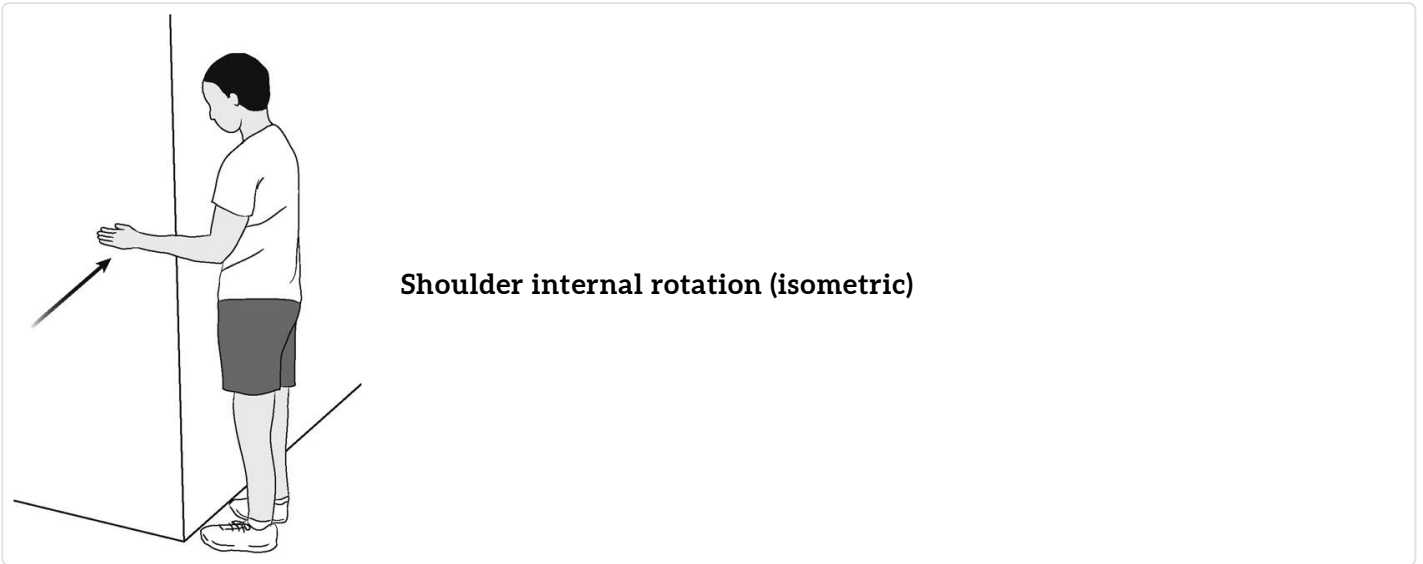


Shoulder Internal Rotation (Isometric)

Stand at a corner of a wall or in a door frame. Place your involved arm against the wall around the corner, bending your elbow 90 degrees. Push the palm of your hand into the wall. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

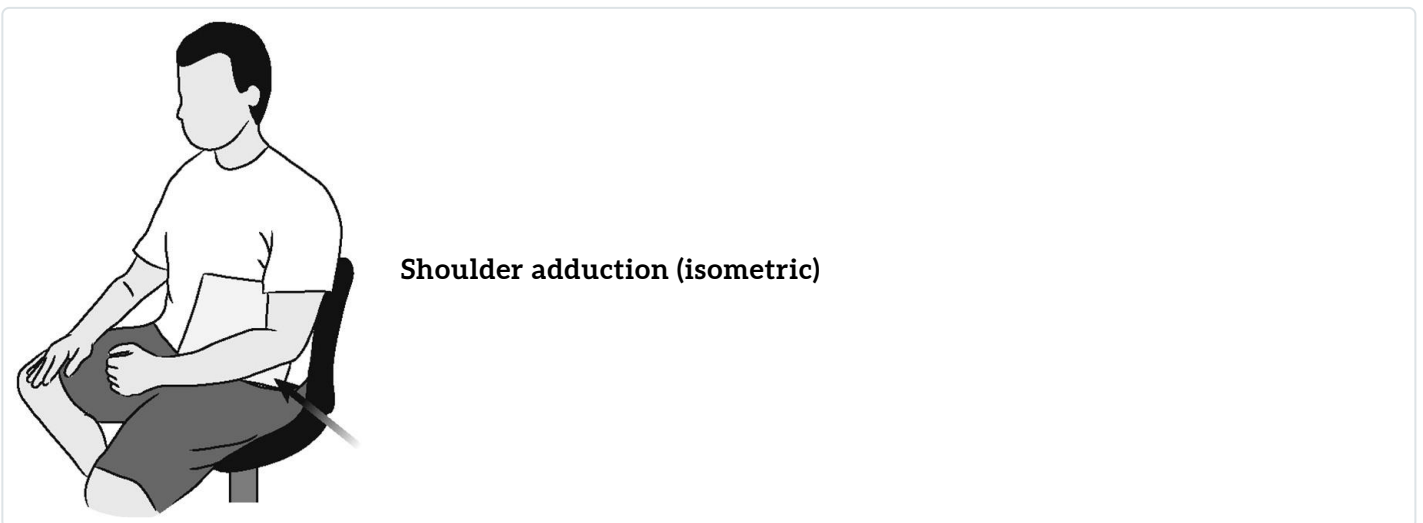


Shoulder Adduction (Isometric)

Place a small pillow between your inner arm and the side of your chest, as shown. With your arm, squeeze the pillow against the side of your chest. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

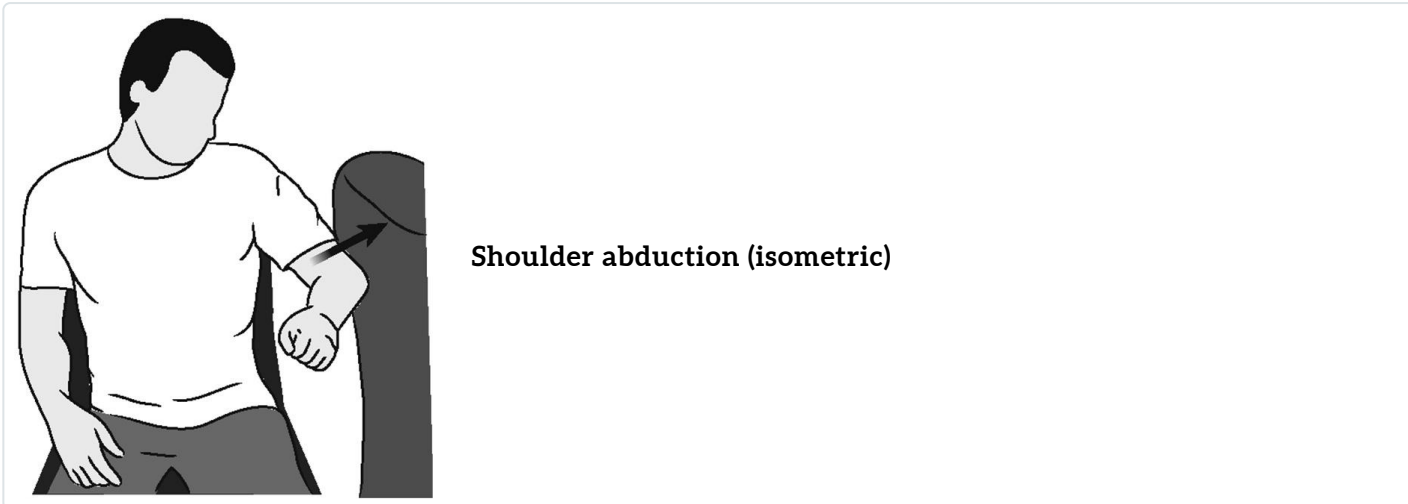


Shoulder Abduction (Isometric)

Resisting upward motion to the side, slowly and gently push your arm against the back of chair. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.



Shoulder Internal Rotation (Strengthening)

Lie on your involved side. Keep your elbow bent at 90 degrees. Holding a light weight, raise hand toward stomach. Slowly return.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.

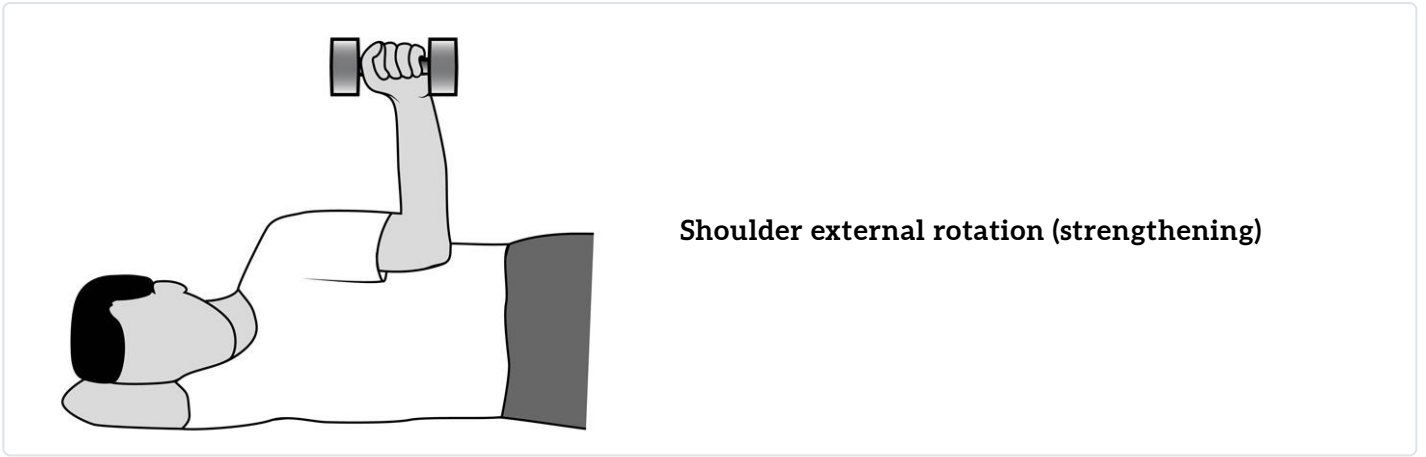


Shoulder External Rotation (Strengthening)

Lie on your uninvolved side. Keep your elbow bent at 90 degrees. Holding a light weight, raise hand away from stomach. Slowly return.

Repeat 10 times per session.

Do 3 sessions a day.



Shoulder external rotation (strengthening)

Last Reviewed

February 2017

Contributed and/or Updated by

[George S. Athwal, MD](#)

[Tracy Elliott, MD](#)

Peer-Reviewed by

[Stuart J. Fischer, MD](#)

AAOS does not endorse any treatments, procedures, products, or physicians referenced herein. This information is provided as an educational service and is not intended to serve as medical advice. Anyone seeking specific orthopaedic advice or assistance should consult his or her orthopaedic surgeon, or locate one in your area through the AAOS [Find an Orthopaedist](#) program on this website.