



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Here are some examples of typical rehabilitation exercises for your condition. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercise if you start to have pain.

Your doctor or physical therapist will tell you when you can start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

### How to do the exercises

#### Posterior stretching exercise



1. Hold the elbow of your injured arm with your opposite hand.
2. Use your hand to pull your injured arm gently up and across your body. You will feel a gentle stretch across the back of your injured shoulder.
3. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds, and then slowly lower your arm.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 2)

### Up-the-back stretch



Note: Your doctor or physical therapist may advise you to wait to do this stretch until you have regained most of your range of motion and strength. You can do this stretch in different ways. Hold any of these stretches for at least 15 to 30 seconds, and repeat 2 to 4 times.

1. Put your hand in your back pocket and let it rest there to stretch your shoulder.
2. With your opposite hand, hold your injured arm (palm outward) behind your back by the wrist. Pull your arm up gently to stretch your shoulder.
3. To progress, put a towel over your opposite shoulder. Put the hand of your injured arm behind your back and hold the back end of the towel. With the other hand, hold the front end of the towel in front of your body. Pull gently on the front end of the towel to gently bring your hand farther up your back to stretch your shoulder.

### Overhead stretch



1. Standing about an arm's length away, grasp onto a solid surface, such as a countertop, a doorknob, or the back of a sturdy chair.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 3)

2. With your knees slightly bent, bend forward with your arms straight, lowering your upper body and letting your shoulders stretch.
3. As your shoulders are able to stretch farther, you may need to take a step or two backward.
4. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds, and then stand up and relax. If you had stepped back during your stretch, step forward so you can keep your hands on the solid surface.
5. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

## Pendulum swing

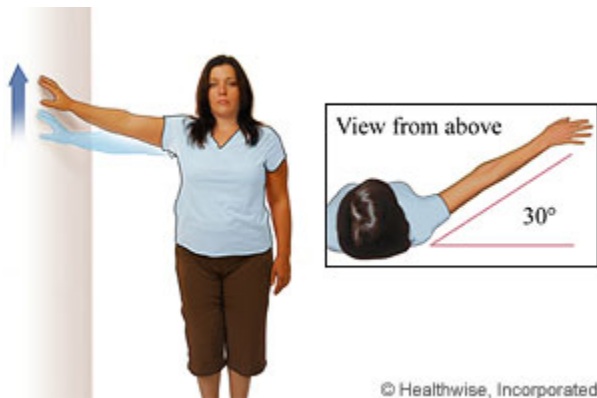


Note: If you have pain in your back, do not do this exercise.

1. While holding onto a table or the back of a chair with your good arm, bend forward a little and let your injured arm hang straight down. This exercise does not use the arm muscles. Rather, use your legs and your hips to create movement that makes your arm swing freely.
2. Using the momentum from your hips and legs, guide the slightly swinging arm back and forth like a pendulum (or elephant trunk) and then in circles that start small (about the size of a dinner plate) and gradually grow larger each day as pain allows.
3. Do this exercise for 5 minutes, 5 to 7 times each day even while your shoulder is still tender from an injury or surgery.
4. As you have less pain, try bending over a little farther to do this exercise. This will increase the amount of movement at your shoulder.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 4)

### Wall climbing (to the side)



Note: Avoid any movement that is straight to your side, and be careful not to arch your back. Your arm should stay about 30 degrees to the front of your side.

1. Stand with your side to a wall so that your fingers can just touch it at an angle about 30 degrees toward the front of your body.
2. Walk the fingers of your injured arm up the wall as high as pain permits. Try not to shrug your shoulder up toward your ear as you move your arm up.
3. Hold that position for a count of at least 15 to 20.
4. Walk your fingers back down to the starting position.
5. Repeat at least 2 to 4 times, trying to reach higher each time.

### Wall climbing (to the front)

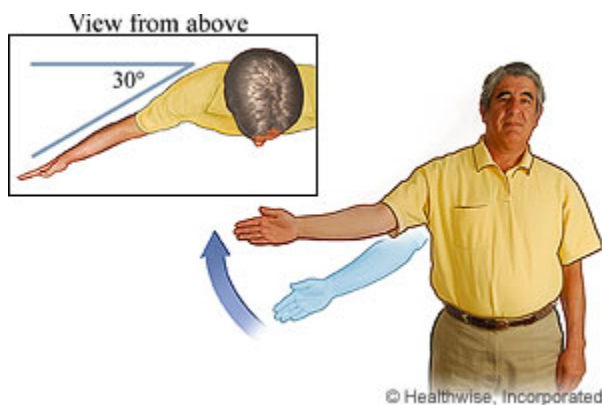


Note: During this stretching exercise, be careful not to arch your back.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 5)

1. Face a wall, standing so your fingers can just touch it.
2. Keeping your shoulder down (don't shrug up toward your ear), walk the fingers of your injured arm up the wall as high as pain permits.
3. Hold that position for at least 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Slowly walk your fingers back down to the starting position.
5. Repeat at least 2 to 4 times, trying to reach higher each time.

### Arm raise to the side



Note: During this strengthening exercise, your arm should stay about 30 degrees to the front of your side.

1. Slowly raise your injured arm to the side, with your thumb facing up. Raise your arm 60 degrees at the most (shoulder level is 90 degrees).
2. After holding the position for 3 to 5 seconds, lower your arm back to your side. If you need to, bring your "good" arm across your body and place it under the elbow as you lower your injured arm. Use your good arm to keep your injured arm from dropping down too fast during the downward motion.
3. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
4. When you first start out, don't hold any additional weight in your hand. As your strength improves, you may use a 1-pound to 2-pound dumbbell or a small can of food.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 6)

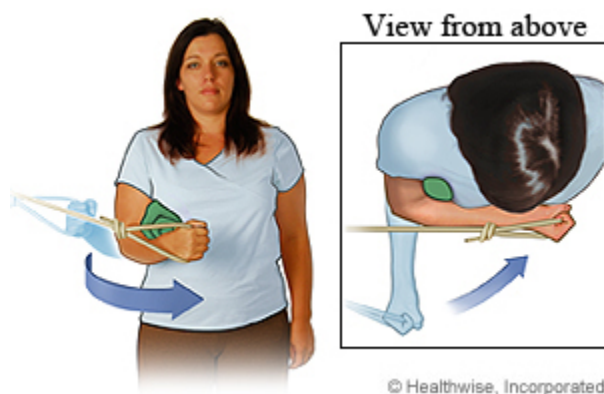
### Shoulder flexor and extensor exercise



Note: These are isometric exercises. That means you contract your muscles without actually moving.

- **Push forward (flex):** Stand facing a wall or doorjamb, about 6 inches or less back. Hold your injured arm against your body. Make a closed fist with your thumb on top and gently push your hand forward into the wall with about 25% to 50% of your strength. Don't let your body move backward as you push. Hold for about 6 seconds. Relax for a few seconds. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
- **Push backward (extend):** Stand with your back flat against a wall. Your upper arm should be against the wall, with your elbow bent 90 degrees (your hand straight ahead). Push your elbow gently back against the wall with about 25% to 50% of your strength. Don't let your body move forward as you push. Hold for about 6 seconds. Relax for a few seconds. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

### Internal rotator strengthening exercise

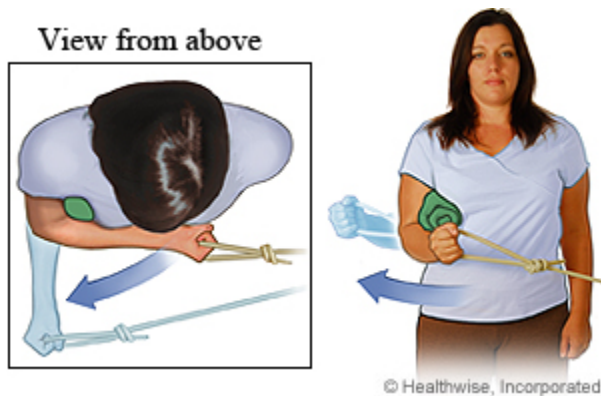


1. Begin by tying a piece of elastic exercise material, such as surgical tubing or Thera-band, to a doorknob.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 7)

2. Stand or sit with your shoulder relaxed and your elbow bent 90 degrees. Your upper arm should rest comfortably against your side. You can squeeze a rolled towel between your elbow and your body for comfort and to help keep your arm at your side.
3. Hold one end of the elastic band in the hand of the injured arm.
4. Rotate your forearm toward your body until it touches your belly.
5. Keep your elbow and upper arm firmly tucked against the towel roll or the side of your body during this movement.
6. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

### External rotator strengthening exercise



1. Begin by tying a piece of elastic exercise material, such as surgical tubing or Thera-band, to a doorknob. (You may also hold one end of the band in each hand.)
2. Stand or sit with your shoulder relaxed and your elbow bent 90 degrees. Your upper arm should rest comfortably against your side. You can squeeze a rolled towel between your elbow and your body for comfort and to help keep your arm at your side.
3. Hold one end of the elastic band with the hand of the injured arm.
4. Start this exercise with your forearm across your belly. Rotate the forearm out away from your body, keeping your elbow and upper arm tucked against the towel roll or the side of your body until you begin to feel tightness in your shoulder.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 8)

### Scapular exercise: Wall push-ups



Note: This exercise is best done with your fingers moderately turned out, rather than straight up and down.

1. Stand facing a wall, about 12 inches to 18 inches away.
2. Place your hands on the wall at shoulder height.
3. Slowly bend your elbows and bring your face to the wall, keeping your back and hips straight.
4. Push back to the starting position.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
6. When you can do this exercise against a wall comfortably, you can try it against a counter. You can then slowly progress to the end of a couch, then to a sturdy chair, and finally to the floor.

### Scapular exercise: Arm reach



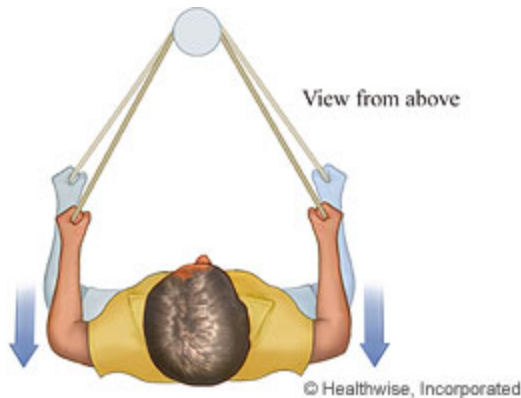
1. Lie flat on your back. This exercise is a very slight motion that starts with your arms raised (elbows straight, arms straight).



## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 9)

2. From this position, reach higher toward the sky or ceiling, keeping your elbows straight. All motion should be from your shoulder blade only.
3. Relax back to the starting position.
4. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

## Scapular exercise: Retraction



Note: For this exercise, you will need elastic exercise material, such as surgical tubing or Thera-band.

1. Put the band around a solid object, such as a bedpost, at about waist level. Each hand should hold an end of the band.
2. With your elbows at your sides and bent to 90 degrees, pull the band back to move your shoulder blades toward each other. Return to the starting position.
3. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
4. If you have good range of motion in your shoulders, try this exercise with your arms lifted out to the sides, with your elbows at a 90-degree angle. Raise the elastic band up to about shoulder level. Pull the band back to move your shoulder blades toward each other. Return to the starting position.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## Rotator Cuff: Exercises (page 10)

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter J005 in the search box to learn more about **"Rotator Cuff: Exercises"**.

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