

# Rotator Cuff Exercises

## Before you start:

The exercises described below are to help you strengthen the muscles in your shoulder (especially the rotator cuff --the part that helps you rotate your arm internally and externally). The rotator cuff muscles are very small muscles just overlying the ligaments and shoulder joint. So, exercising these muscles can help ligaments and joint tissue heal by increasing blood supply to the ligaments and adjacent tissues which do not generally have much blood supply.

These exercises should not cause you pain. If the exercise hurts, stop exercising. Start again with a lighter weight.

Look at the pictures with each exercise so you can use the correct position. Warm up before adding weights. Stretch your arms and shoulders, and do gentle pendulum exercises: Bend from the waist, letting your arms hang down. Keep your arm and shoulder muscles relaxed, and move your arms slowly back and forth. Perform each exercise slowly: Lift your arm to a slow count of 3 and lower your arm to a slow count of 6.

Keep repeating each exercise just short of your arm becoming fatigued. Use a light enough weight that you don't get tired until you've done the exercise about 20 to 30 times and stop before becoming tired. Increase the weight a little each week (but never so much that the weight causes pain). Start with 1-2 pounds the first week. Move up 1 pound as the exercise feels "too" easy. More is not necessarily better, it is better to do the exercise regularly and not re-injure your shoulder in the process

Each time you finish doing all 4 exercises, put a cold pack on your shoulder for 15 minutes. You can use a plastic bag with ice cubes in it, a bag of frozen peas, or a gel pack that we have here at the office. If you do all 4 exercises 3 (good) to 5 (better) times a week, your rotator cuff muscles will become stronger, your joint will gain stability, and you'll get back normal strength in your shoulder.

## Exercise 1

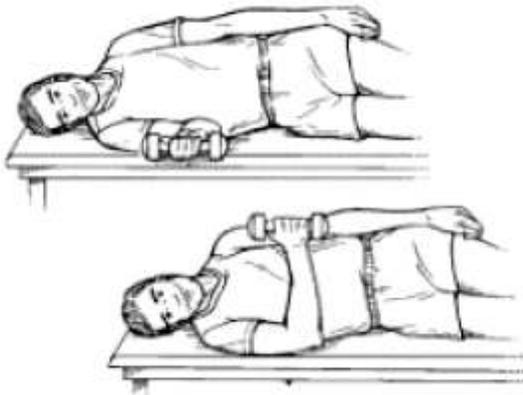
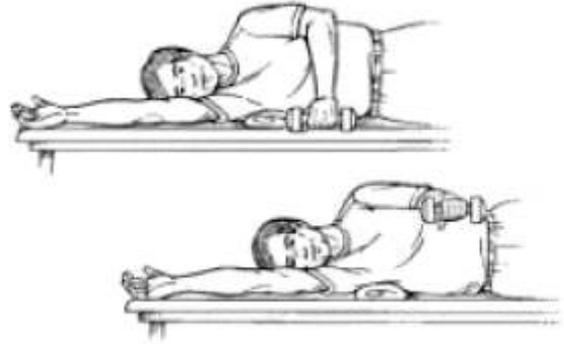
Start by lying on your stomach on a table or a bed. Put your left arm out at shoulder level with your elbow bent to 90° and your hand down. Keep your elbow bent, and slowly raise your left hand. Stop when your hand is level with your shoulder. Lower the hand slowly. Repeat the exercise stopping just before your arm is tired. Then do the exercise with your right arm.



## Rotator Cuff Exercises (Continued)

### Exercise 2

Lie on your right side with a rolled-up towel under your right armpit. Stretch your right arm above your head. Keep your left arm at your side with your elbow bent to 90° and the forearm resting against your chest, palm down. Roll your left shoulder out, raising the left forearm until it's level with your shoulder. (Hint: This is like the backhand swing in tennis.) Lower the arm slowly. Repeat the exercise stopping just before your arm is tired. Then do the exercise with your right arm.



### Exercise 3

Lie on your right side. Keep your left arm along the upper side of your body. Bend your right elbow to 90°. Keep the right forearm resting on the table. Now roll your right shoulder in, raising your right forearm up to your chest. (Hint: This is like the forehand swing in tennis.) Lower the forearm slowly. Repeat the exercise stopping just before your arm is tired. Then do the exercise with your left arm.

### Exercise 4

In a standing position, start with your right arm halfway between the front and side of your body, thumb down. (You may need to raise your left arm for balance.) Raise your right arm until almost level (about a 45° angle). (Hint: This is like emptying a can.) Don't lift beyond the point of pain. Slowly lower your arm. Repeat the exercise stopping just before your arm is tired. Then do the exercise with your left arm.

