

Patient information

Physiotherapy for Subacromial Shoulder Pain

Therapies

Advice

- Using your arm will not do you any harm but avoid aggravating your pain by doing too much.
- Using your arm can help reduce muscle spasm, strengthen muscles, and improve movement.
- Use pain medication as advised.
- Pain that affects your ability to sleep can be exhausting. It is however a vicious cycle, and the lack of sleep can make the pain seem worse. Talking to your GP about this is important. Your physiotherapist can also advise you on how to improve and obtain healthy sleep.
- Wear loose, front fastening tops.
- Place your affected arm in first when dressing.
- Remove your affected arm last when undressing.
- Supporting your affected arm at the elbow can help you use it during daily activities.
- Use both hands to lift things rather than one.
- If reaching outwards is painful, step towards things instead of reaching out for them.
- Pace your activity – set goals, take regular breaks, be consistent with activity and spread your activities out. Try and not do too much when you feel good and push yourself to still do things when you don't feel so good. Remember to start low and build up gradually to get fitter, so that in the long run you can do more.

General Exercise

- General exercise can really help your recovery so try to keep going with other activities you enjoy to keep fit.
- If you don't exercise regularly try and build something in – even a brisk 20-minute walk three times a week will help.
- This can help reduce your pain as well as improving your general health, sleep, mood, energy levels, appetite, and weight.

Mental Wellbeing

Ongoing pain can be difficult to cope with day-to-day. It can limit your activities, including things you find enjoyable. This can lead to low mood (feeling a bit fed-up, or a bit down). Sometimes low mood can also make your pain feel worse, leading to a cycle of pain and less activity.

There are lots of ways that we can tackle low mood, such as:

- Write a list of all the things you are able to do that you find enjoyable, such as listening to music, talking with friends, going for a walk. Then plan to do a few of these things every day.
- Get as active as you can. We know that even light exercise or activity can help lift our mood.
- If you can, talk about how you are feeling with someone you feel comfortable with, like a relative or a friend.
- Look after yourself by trying to eat healthy meals.
- Try to keep a routine each day with meals and sleeping times.

If you feel your mood is not improving, or may be getting worse, then it is worth talking to your GP about it, or you can contact Talk Liverpool directly yourself on 0151 228 2300 or www.merseycare.nhs.uk/our-services/liverpool/talking-therapies

Goal Setting

- What do you want to do that you can't do now?
- What activity do you want to return to?
- Your physiotherapist will ensure your treatment and exercises relate to this.

Joint Mobilisations



These are movements of joints and other structures performed by the therapist.

There are various techniques and can be combined with active movement.

They can alter the pain signals to and from the brain.

They can also reduce 'muscle stiffness' in your shoulder, neck, and upper back.

Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy involves carrying out exercises and specific physiotherapy techniques in warm water to help relieve pain, relax, and strengthen muscles, increase circulation, improving function. This can be a useful addition to land-based physiotherapy. Your physiotherapist will assess your suitability for a referral for hydrotherapy.

Exercises

- Reduce pain.
- Maintain the health of the tissues within and around the shoulder.
- Reduce stiffness in the shoulder.
- Strengthen the muscles around the shoulder.

There are exercises below which will help stretch and strengthen your tissues and muscles. Your physiotherapist will guide you through an exercise programme designed specifically for you. He/she will guide you as to how many of each exercise you should perform and how often.

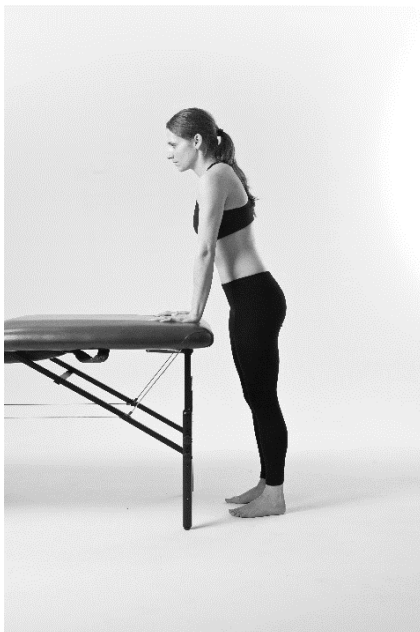
You may experience a slight increase in pain whilst exercising. This is ok as long as it starts to settle within one hour and is not worse the next day. If this happens, don't worry, do less repetitions the next time and then gradually build up again.

Build the exercises into your daily routine so you can do them regularly.

Find time when you are not under pressure and can give the exercises your full attention. It can help to keep an exercise diary to record how many repetitions you have done and see how you are progressing.

Did you know that only approximately 20% of shoulder strength comes from the shoulder itself? 30% comes from the waist up, and about 50% from the waist down. This means that even if the task seems like it is just for the shoulders it is important to use your legs when possible so that your shoulders can be as strong as possible. That is why a lot of the exercises which you will be guided through, that are the most effective for your shoulders, involve a squat or a step.

Weightbearing co-contraction



In standing place your hands on a table and put some weight equally through your hands. As you weight bear through your hands, open up across the chest. This is a nice gentle way to get your shoulder muscles working.

Repeat:

Isometric internal rotation



In sitting, affected arm by your side. Place the unaffected hand on the front of the affected forearm and gently push against it.

You can put a towel between the inside of your arm and your body to help you keep this position.

Gently push to 30% of your maximum effort.

This can also be done with the arm supported e.g., on the arm of a chair.

Repeat:

Isometric external rotation



In sitting, affected arm by your side. Place the unaffected hand on the outside of the affected forearm at wrist level and gently push against it.

You can put a towel between the inside of your arm and your body to help you keep this position.

Gently push to 30% of your maximum effort.

This can also be done with the arm supported e.g., on the arm of a chair

Repeat:

Seated table slide into flexion

In sitting, rest your hands on a table. Using a duster/towel slide both hands forwards as far as comfortable. Let your head drop forwards slightly at the end of the movement.

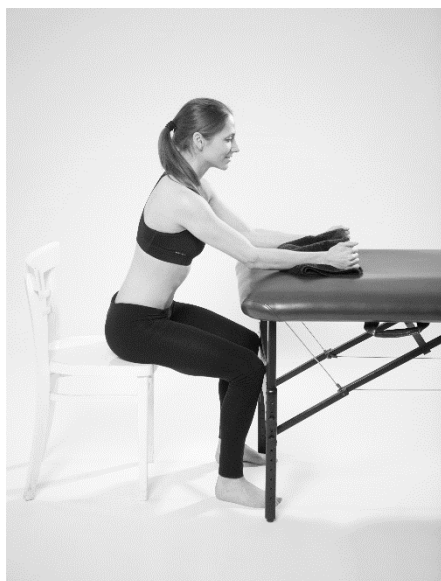
Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:



Alternative:

Place your forearms on the table with your palms facing each other and your elbows slightly flexed.

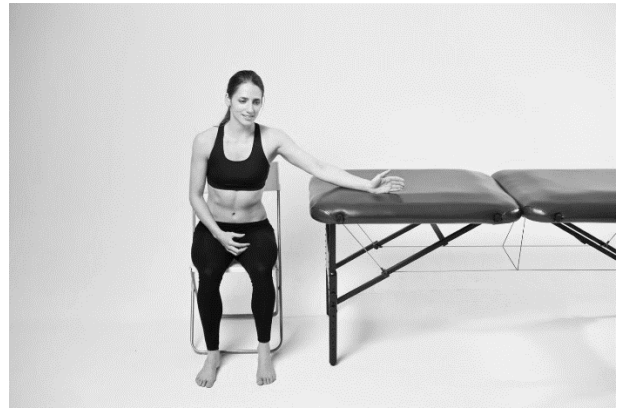
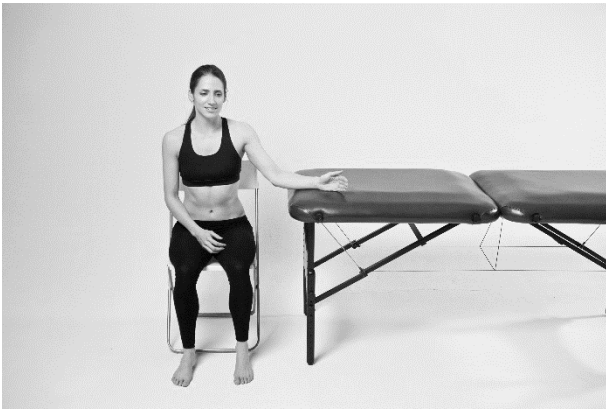


Seated table slide into abduction

Sitting next to a table. Rest your forearm on the tabletop. Using a duster/towel slide your arm away from your body as far as comfortable whilst maintaining contact with the table throughout the movement.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:

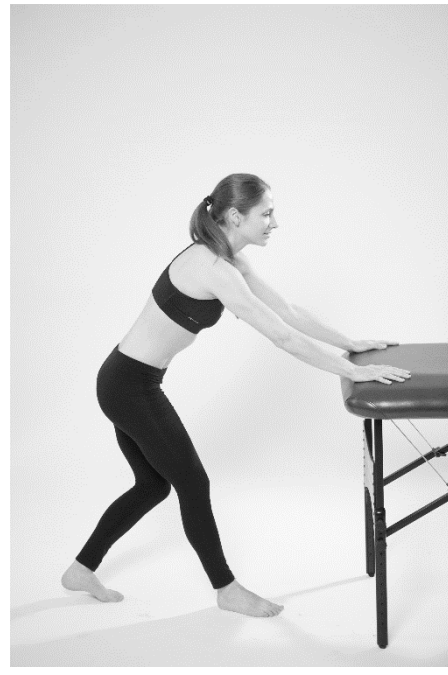


Step back flexion in standing

Stand with good posture in front of a high table/kitchen worktop. Place your hands on the table and step one foot backwards leaving your hands supported, allowing your shoulders to flex.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:



Adaptation easier:

Place your forearms on a table, keeping your elbows bent and then step back.

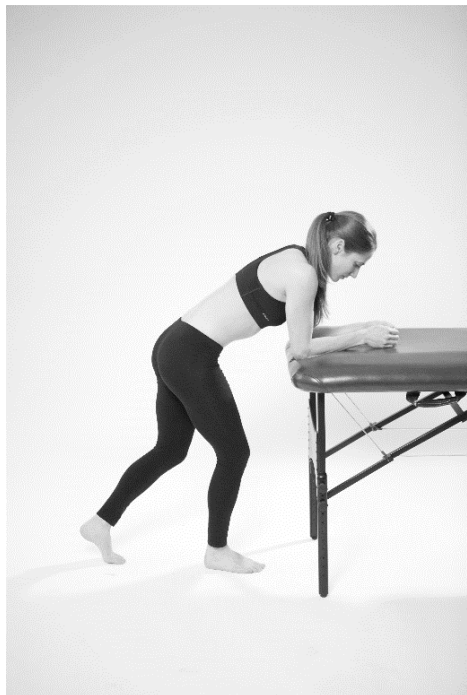
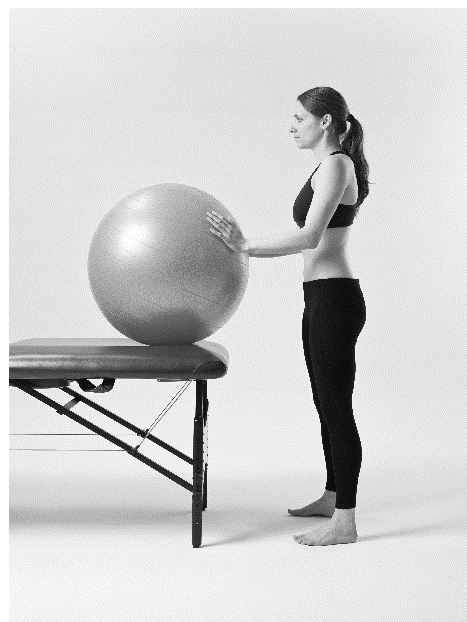


Table gum ball flexion



Standing with one foot in front of the other, facing the table, place your hands or hand of the affected arm on the ball placed on the table. Keeping your hand/s on the ball, roll the ball away from you, transferring your weight from the back to the front leg.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:



Table gym ball flexion squat

Standing facing the table, place both hands on top of the ball. Bend your knees into a squat position whilst your hands remain on the ball, allowing the ball to roll across the table. Return to your starting position.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:

Table swiss ball abduction

Stand next to the ball on the tabletop with the hand of your affected shoulder resting on the ball. Roll the ball out to the side transferring your weight towards the ball.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:

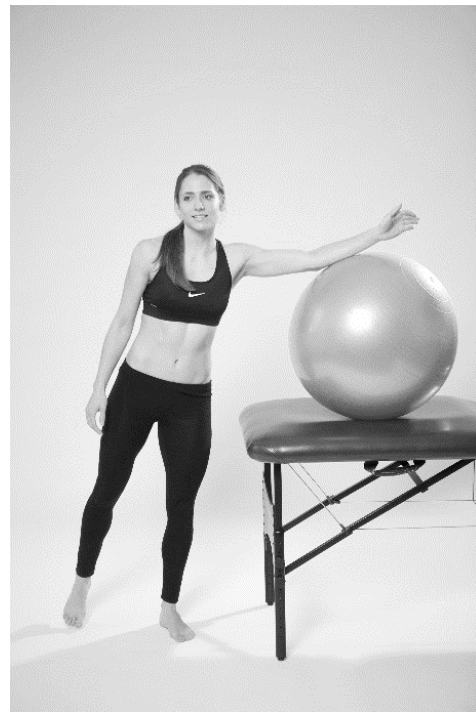
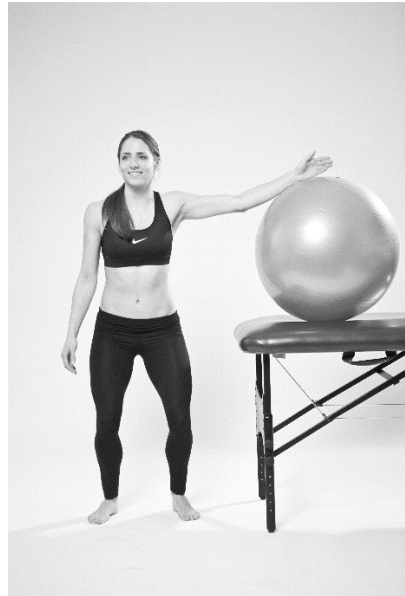


Table gym ball abduction squat

Stand next to the ball on the tabletop with the hand of your affected shoulder resting on the ball. Bend your knees into a squat position whilst your hands remain on the ball allowing the ball to roll. Return to your starting position.

Do not force into a stretch.

Repeat:

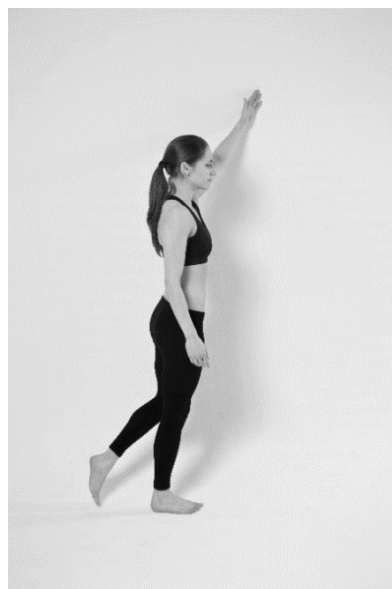
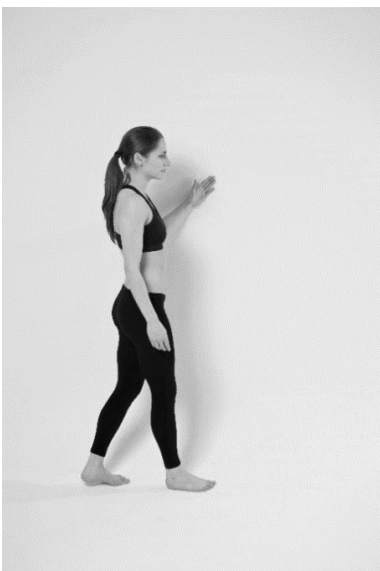


Lateral wall slide with step forward

Standing tall, side on to a wall. Affected arm next to the wall. Bend your elbow and apply a gentle pressure against the wall with the back of your hand. Step forward and whilst maintaining this gentle pressure, slide your arm upwards against the wall into elevation.

Alternative: Assist with your opposite hand under the elbow.

Repeat:



Wall slides

Standing with a good posture facing the wall. Slide your hands up the wall, keeping in contact with the wall throughout the movement. Continue as high as comfortable feeling a gentle stretch at the top of the movement. Return to your starting position keeping your hands on the wall throughout the movement.

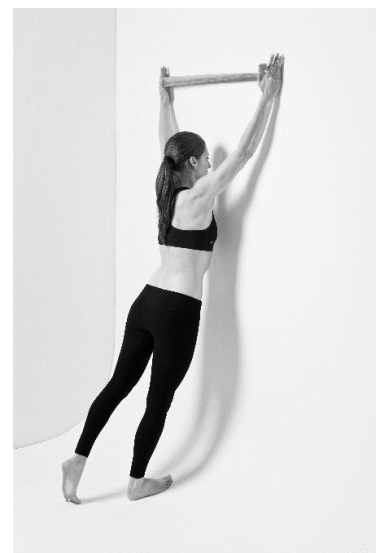
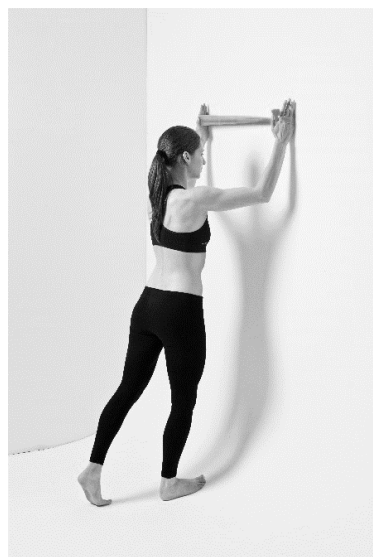
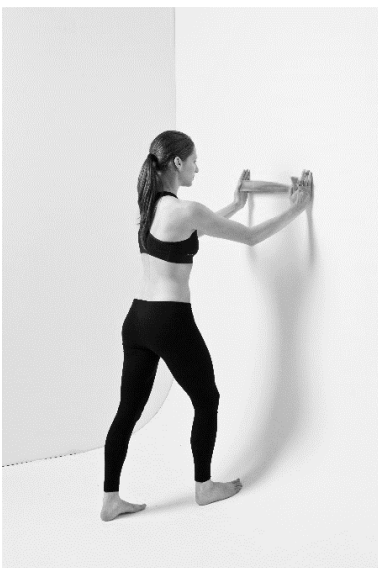
Repeat:



Wall slides with resistance band loop

Step standing with good posture facing the wall. Loop a resistance band around your hands/wrists with your little fingers placed on the wall. Slide your hands up the wall, transferring your weight from the back foot to the front foot. Keep in contact with the wall throughout the movement, gently pushing out into the resistance band. Return to your starting position.

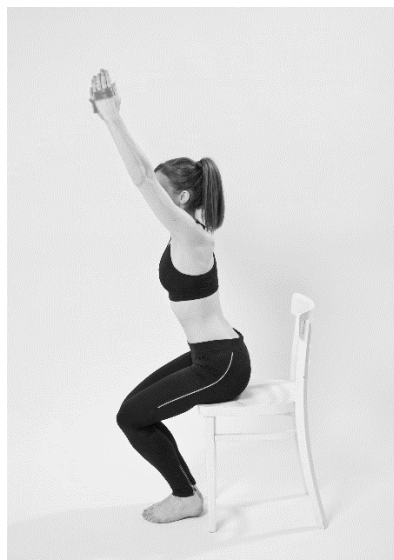
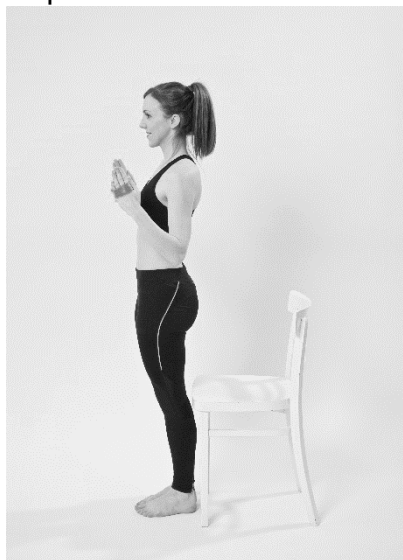
Repeat:



Standing to sitting taking the arms into elevation with resistance band loop

Stand in front of a chair. Place a loop of resistance band around your hands keeping the elbows bent. Gently push out with the backs of the hands against the resistance band to activate the muscles in the back of your shoulder. As you sit onto the chair take both arms up into full elevation. Return to your starting position keeping the resistance on the band throughout the movement.

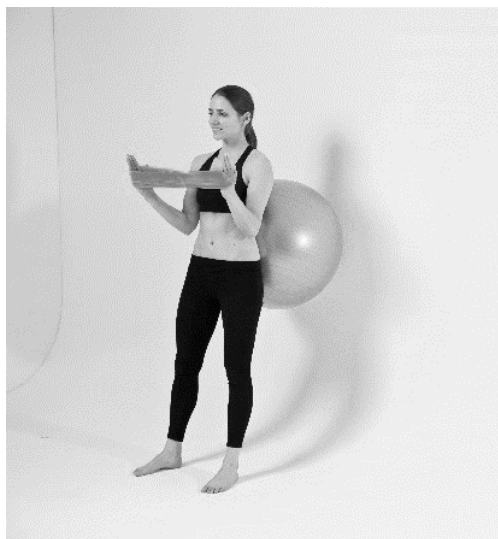
Repeat:



Wall squats with gym ball and resistance band loop

Standing with your feet hip width apart. Place the gym ball between your shoulder blades and lean back on the ball against a wall. Bend your elbows to 90° with a loop of resistance band around your hands/wrists. Hands should face each other. Push outwards against the resistance of the looped band. Squat bending your knees to about 90°, and at the same time raise your arms up in one smooth movement straightening your elbows when finishing with your arms above your head. Maintain the resistance on the band throughout the movement. Slowly return to the starting position by reversing the movement with your elbows.

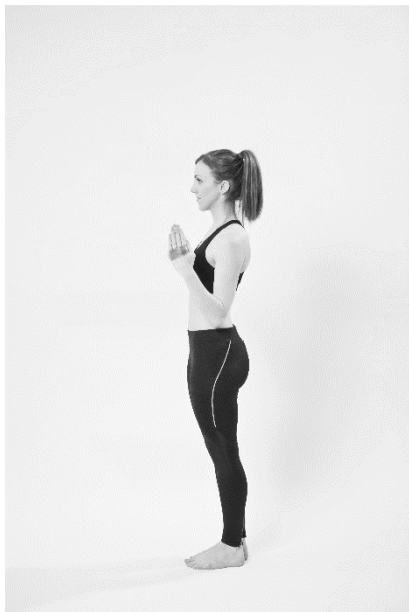
Repeat:



Step forwards with resistance band loop

Standing with your feet hip width apart. Bend your elbows to 90° with a loop of resistance band around your hands/wrists. Hands should face each other. Take a step forwards, and at the same time, stretch the band by taking your hands out to the side and raise your arms up in one smooth movement straightening your elbows when finishing with your arms above your head. Slowly return to the starting position by reversing the movement with the elbows.

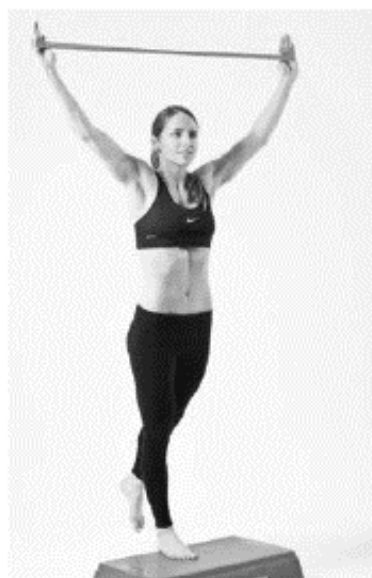
Repeat:



Step up with resistance band loop.

Stand facing a step. Place one foot on the step, and a loop of resistance band around your hands gently pushing out. Hands facing each other, keeping your arms out in front of you with your elbows bent to 90°. Maintain this outward force as you step forwards onto the step. At the same time straighten both arms lifting them up and out to the side finishing in a 'V' above your head. Return to your starting position and change legs.

Repeat:



Four point kneeling lateral glides with resistance band loop

Kneeling on your hands and knees, place a loop of resistance band around your hands. Using a towel/duster slide your unaffected hand on the floor away against the resistance and return to your starting position.

Repeat:

Then, repeat this with the affected hand.

Repeat:

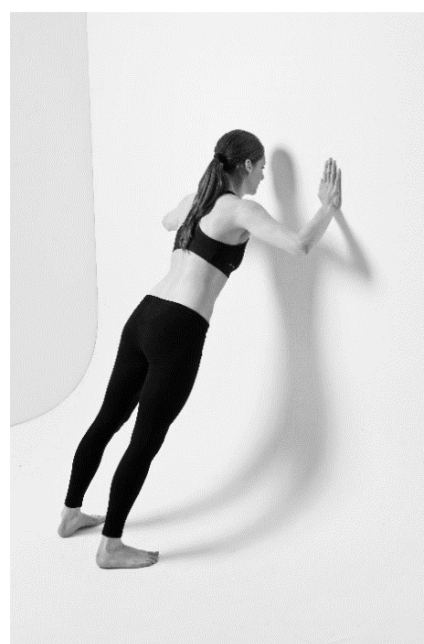
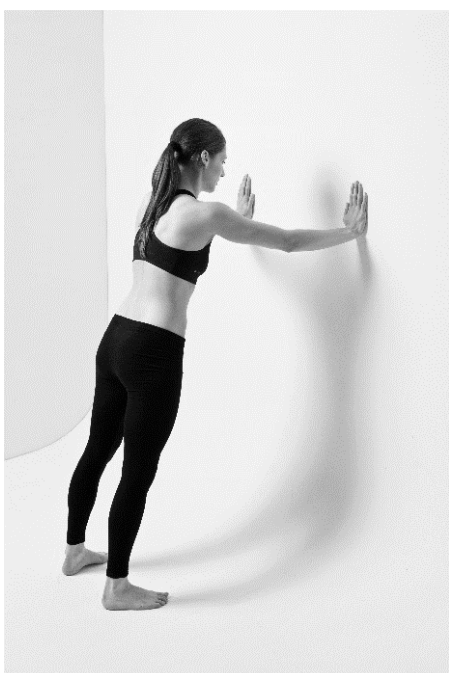


Wall press up

Stand feet hip width apart with your hands on the wall. Maintain a good posture. Bend your elbows to 90° lowering your body to the wall. Return to your starting position.

Alternative: Perform a wall press up with a resistance band loop, on tension, around your wrists.

Repeat:



Spiderman

Start in a gently squat if able. Hands flat on the wall inside a looped resistance band, pushing it apart. Keep tension on against the band and walk your hands up the wall as high as you can reach. Straighten your legs. Return to your starting position.

Repeat:

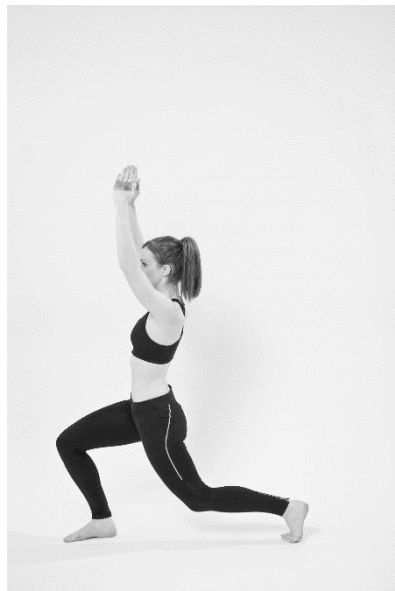


External rotation and elevation with resistance band loop into lunge

Standing with your feet hip width apart. Bend your elbows to 90° with a loop of resistance band around your hands/wrists. Hands should face each other. Push outwards against the resistance of the looped band. Step forwards with the opposite leg into a lunge, and at the same time, stretch the band by taking your hands out to the side and raise your arms up in one smooth movement straightening your elbows when finishing with your arms above your head. Slowly return to the starting position by reversing the movement with the elbows and stepping back.

Alternative: If difficulty lunging forward with control, then lunge backwards.

Repeat:



Protraction and lunge with resistance band loop

Stand with a good posture and the resistance band looped under both armpits at the level of your shoulder blades, holding the ends in both hands. Lunge forward and at the same time push both hands forwards stretching the elbows straight. Release the band slowly as you return to your starting position.

Repeat using the opposite leg to lunge.

Repeat:



Sword / Lawnmower with resistance band

Start in a rotated lunge position, holding a resistance band in both hands. Move in a diagonal pattern, by stepping back to transfer your weight onto the affected side and take your arm up and out as high as comfortable. Hold and slowly return to the starting position by reversing the movement.

Repeat:



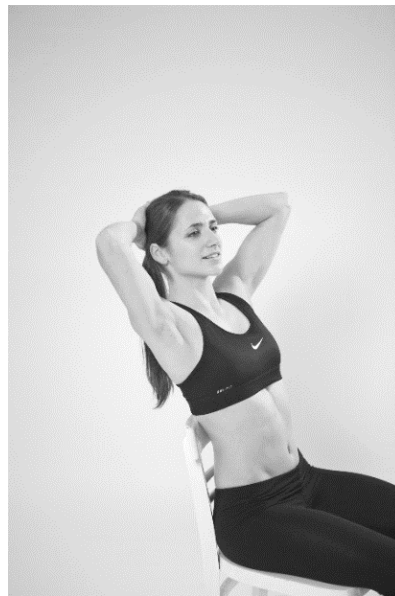
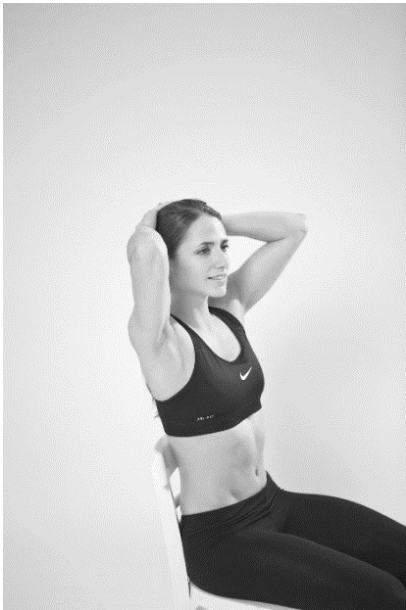
Thoracic extension over a chair

Sitting in a chair, place both hands behind your head to support your head and neck. Lean back over the chair, feel as stretch in your mid back.

You can stretch different areas of your mid back by sliding your bottom forwards in the chair.

Alternative: If you are unable to put your hands behind your head, place them across your chest, or use the unaffected arm only.

Repeat:

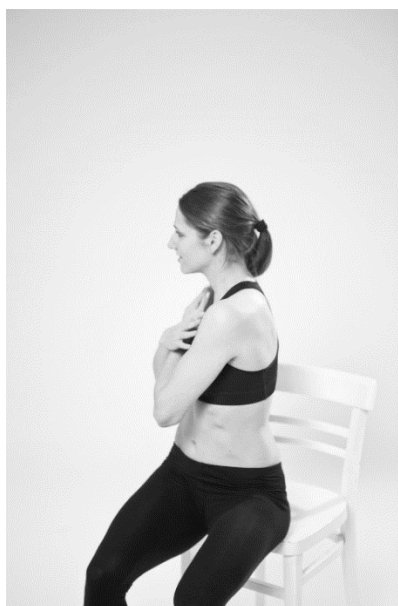
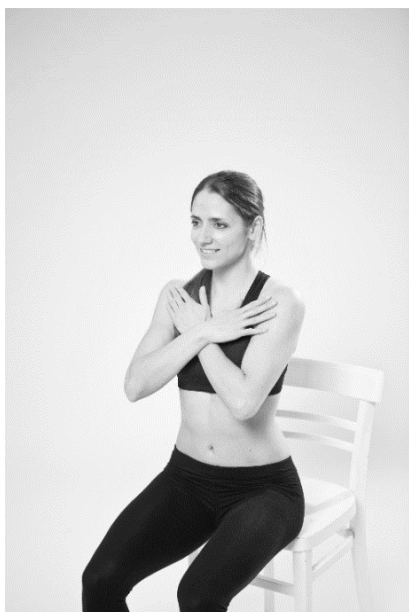


Thoracic rotational stretch

In sitting cross your arms across your chest. Keeping your hips and pelvis still twist your body to the right, feeling a stretch in your mid back. Repeat, turning towards your left until you feel a stretch in your mid back.

To add a further stretch, reach round for the back of the chair and pull round gently.

Repeat:



Thread the needle with weight

In four-point kneeling with a weight in the affected hand “thread” the arm holding the weight underneath your supporting arm, letting your body twist as you do so. Keep your weight as evenly distributed as possible on your supporting limbs. Once you have reached as far as you can go, take the weighted arm back and lift it behind you as far as you comfortably can, letting your body twist in the other direction.

Repeat:

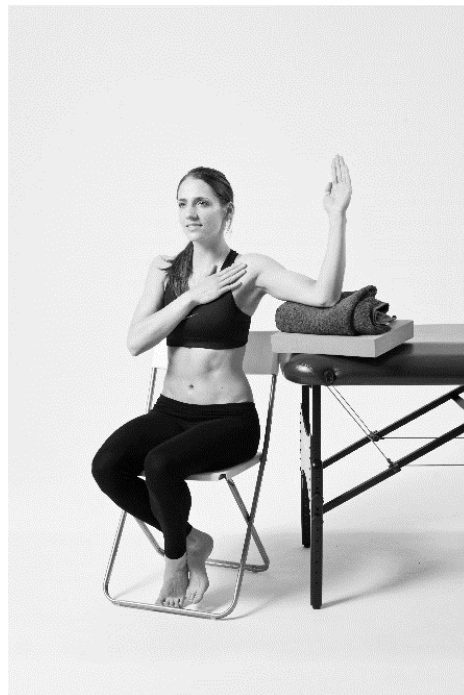


Isolated posterior cuff in sitting

Sitting tall with your elbow supported on a table. Maintain your shoulder blade control and slowly rotate your arm backwards.

Progression: Hold a weight in your hand.

Take your arm into 90° abduction.



Prone isolated posterior cuff

Lie on your front with your arm supported fully to the elbow, in 90° shoulder abduction. Bend your elbow to 90° and maintain your shoulder blade control. Slowly rotate your arm backwards to your full available pain free range and slowly return.

Progression: Hold a weight in your hand.

Remove the towel support.



Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future. Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your Outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Useful Websites:

<https://bess.ac.uk/subacromial-pain/>

You can access videos for the above exercises from the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-DY7WyugV4Ffohp_2lZPugx1FSDt8FSo

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