



SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENT'S SECTION

Self-management of shoulder disorders—Part 1 [☆]

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Shoulder problems: postural advice

Shoulder problems are common and can be quite disabling. Tendinitis of the rotator cuff or biceps tendon, frozen shoulder, or instability (SLAP tears) are the most frequent diagnosis. Each of these conditions requires a step by step self-care prescription guided by a rehabilitation specialist (e.g. physical therapist or chiropractor).

The first stage of training involves low-load exercises which place the shoulder in an optimal posture for reducing further biomechanical irritation. Typically this entails avoiding overhead arm positions, slouching, and shrugged shoulders or rounded shoulders. The exercises shown here are designed to activate the stabilizing musculature of the shoulder girdle. For each exercise perform 8–10 repetitions, slowly, twice a day.

The all fours rock

Purpose: This is an excellent exercise to wake up the deep stabilizers of the shoulder girdle.

Starting position:

- On all 4's (quadruped) perform a partial push-up
- Exercise:*
- Lower your chest towards the floor and feel your shoulder blades slide together

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- Push yourself back up and feel your shoulder blades begin to separate
- Push away or press your back up from the floor with your hands until your shoulder blades are separated as far as possible and your back moves up towards the ceiling
- Hold this position and rock side to side 2–3 in in each direction

Fine tuning:

Perform the rocking motion while keeping ideal posture

- Draw your chin in so your head and neck are in line with your middle back
- Keep your middle back flat not round
- Avoid shrugging your shoulders up towards your ears
- Tighten your abdominal muscles without holding your breath or rounding your lower back (Fig. 1)

Backhand/frisbee toss

Purpose: This exercise is designed to re-program the muscles used in pulling motions.

Starting position:

- Standing in a semi-squat position
- Exercise*
- Begin with a “wind-up motion” by reaching your right palm towards your left shoulder while twisting your torso to the left as well.

- Most of your body weight will be on your left leg.
- Slowly untwist while you step to the side and transfer your weight to your right leg
- As your weight transfers let your arm unfurl across your body while turning your palm up
- Hold this final position



Figure 1 All fours rock. (a) Correct, (b) incorrect.

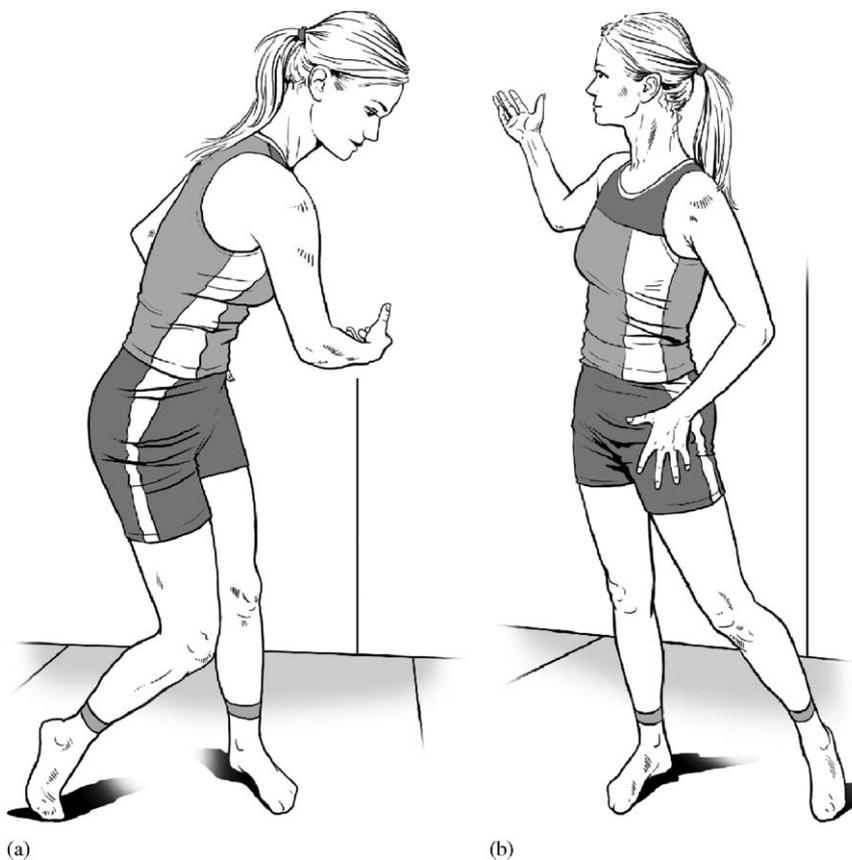


Figure 2 Backhand/frisbee Toss: (a) beginning position and (b) final position.

Fine tuning:

- Keep your chest up (e.g. avoid slouching) and your shoulder back and down away from your ear (avoid shoulder shrugging) throughout the movement
- Generate most of the strength for the motion by turning your hips
- Keep your elbow in close to your side until the very end of the motion
- Feel a slight stretch in the hip on your back hip at the end of the motion (Fig. 2)

Push-pull

Purpose: This exercise is designed to loosen your shoulder blade and train the muscles used during both pushing and pulling motions.

Starting Position:

- Stand, right arm extended in a punch position, left foot forward

Exercise:

- Slowly bring your right arm back into a “cocked position” with your fist near your waist

- Simultaneously, step backward with the opposite foot so that this leg is behind your right foot
- Repeat the movement slowly and smoothly

Fine tuning:

- Maintain an upright posture (e.g. avoid slouching or slumping)
- Allow your shoulder blade to slide down your back as far it will go (e.g. avoid shrugging your shoulder up towards your ear (Fig. 3))

Lawn mower

Purpose: This exercise is designed to re-program the muscles used in pulling motions

Starting position:

- In a standing position reach forward and grasp a pulley handle or elastic band with your hand

Exercise:

- Position yourself so that your opposite foot is forward
- Pull your hand back as if starting a lawn mower
- Repeat the movement slowly (Fig. 4)



Figure 3 Push-pull: (a) beginning position and (b) final position.

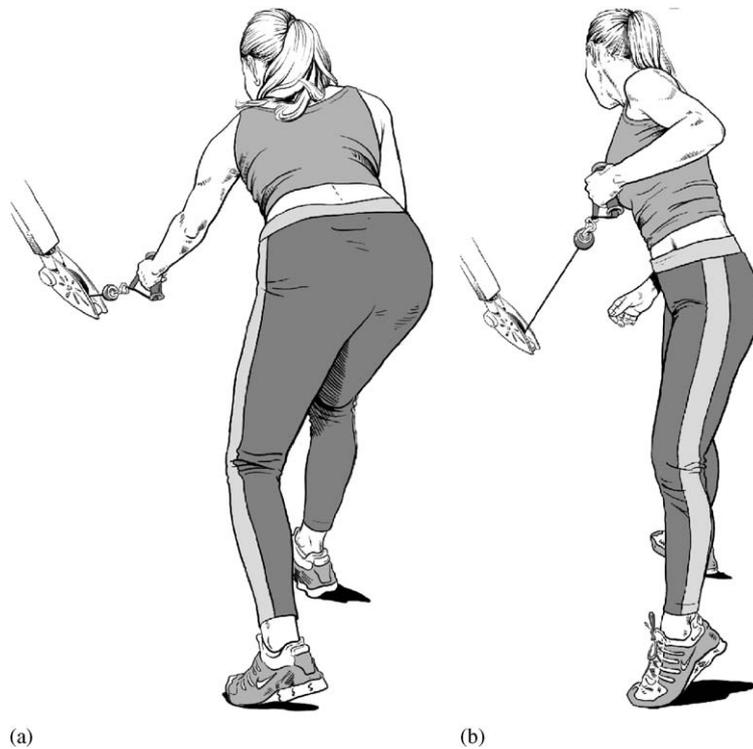


Figure 4 Lawn mower: (a) beginning position and (b) final position.

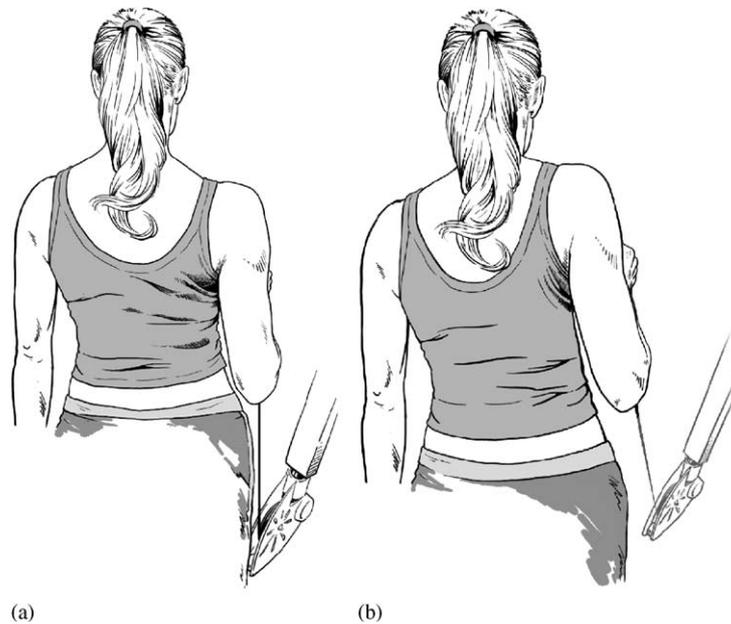


Figure 5 Shoulder position: (a) correct and (b) incorrect—shrugged up.

Fine tuning:

- Stick your chest out (e.g. avoid stooping forward) throughout the movement
- Keep your shoulder blade “set” (tilted back and down your back) while avoiding shrugging your shoulder up (Fig. 5)