# SHOULDER INJURIES: EXERCISES TO AVOID OR ADJUST

You can usually go to the gym if you have a shoulder injury; but you probably will need to adjust your workout while the injury is healing. Here is some guidance about how to do that. NOTE: Check with your health care practitioner before following this advice.

## 01. ANYTHING OVERHEAD

An injured shoulder may not have the scapular stability to allow pain-free overhead movement. Replace w/ something with the elbow below shoulder height, and focus on avoiding shrugging:

- Half-overhead press instead of overhead press.
- Inverted row instead of pull-ups or chin-ups.
- Avoid lat pulldowns, and push presses.

## 02. BARBELL BENCH PRESS

Requires a lot of range of motion, with your shoulder blades locked in place, and the healthy and injured side need to contribute equally. Try the following alternatives:

- Floor press (the floor limits the range of motion).
- DB bench press (each arm can work to its ability).
- Bottom up kettlebell bench press (develops stability to prepare your shoulder for barbell bench press).

## 03. LONG-LEVER AT THE SHOULDER JOINT

The force exerted on your shoulder by a weight that is a straight arm's length away may be more than it can handle. Replace w/ an exercise where the weight is not as far from the shoulder:

- DB row instead of reverse fly.
- Cable press or floor press instead of flys.
- Use reduced range of motion (ROM) for landmine rotations, and Pallof presses.
- Replace chops and lifts with lateral chops with reduced ROM
- Avoid front raises and lateral raises

## 04. WEIGHT PULLS THE SHOULDER FORWARD

An injured shoulder may not have the stability to hold the humeral head (top of the arm bone) in a strong position during these exercises. These may be fine if you focus on shoulder position and start with less weight than you normally do.

- Avoid bicep curls and tricep extensions

## 05. PUTTING WEIGHT DIRECTLY ON THE SHOULDER

Depending on the specifics of your shoulder issue, this category may or may not be an issue for you.

- Try goblet squats, zercher squats (with a bar or cable), or split squats instead of back or front squats
- Hollow-body holds or dead bugs (arm to side) instead of planks
- Glute bridges instead of bird dogs
- Try an off-bench side plank instead of side planks (note this is an advanced exercise that requires balance)

**You can find videos of the underlined exercises at youtube.com/@customstrength.**

Created by Custom Strength based on 15 years of training clients referred by their health care practitioners. Go to customstrength.com/contact-us to train with us in Ottawa.

# SHOULDER INJURIES: EXERCISES YOU (LIKELY) CAN DO

## 01. MANY HORIZONTAL EXERCISES

Horizontal rowing is almost always a good choice, but it may require reduced range of motion (ROM) and mindfulness of shoulder position (avoid a forward roll).

- This includes cable rows, and DB rows.

## 02. SHOULDER MOBILITY AND STABILITY EXERCISES

- Band Ws (or prone) are usually good. Ts may or may not be.
- Half-kneel KB halo is a great shoulder mobility and stability exercise that is also a great core exercise. Start with a small ROM and stay pain-free.
- Wall slides with foam roll. Pushing gently into the foam roll offers an opportunity for more pain-free ROM than just lifting the arms.
- Band pull apart, start with elbows bent and progress to straight arm.
- Band external rotation and press. Start with a light band. If there is any discomfort, push the wrists out more. Only continue if that makes it pain-free. Only press out as far as is pain-free.
- Shoulder packing is a great tool to improve shoulder stability. Keep the arm vertical and the elbow straight.
- Arm circles (especially this version). If there is discomfort, move further away from the wall. It's okay if you're very far from the wall at first.
- Tiger ball (upper back, pecs, upper traps).

## 03. THORACIC SPINE MOBILITY

When the thoracic spine extends and rotates well, the shoulder won't need to work as hard.

- Try this Tspine extension on a foam roll exercise, being mindful to not arch your lower back.
- Try this sidelying rotation (hands on head) exercise.

## 04. CORE EXERCISES

In addition to the recommendations on the other side of this page, the following should be good choices:

- Single-leg lowering on a foam roll.
- Suitcase carries and farmer's walks. Even though this pulls your shoulder, it does so in a way that helps keep the joint centered.
- Glute bridges (single-leg or two-leg). You can add resistance to these with a weight plate on your stomach or use a daisy chain like this, or progress to a barbell.

## 05. LOWER BODY

- Deadlifts are usually very good for the shoulder. Arguably it is a shoulder rehab exercise.
- Split squats, lunges, step-ups
- Single-leg Romanian deadlifts, keeping the weights close to the body.
- Skater squats

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Created based on 15 years of training clients referred by their health care practitioners. Our training around shoulder injuries program is available at products.customstrength.com.