

VIBEMOTION LABS · ATHLETE RECOVERY

SPECIFIC INJURY PROGRAMME

Shoulder Injury

Recovery Programme

Free

Complete programme for rotator cuff injuries, shoulder impingement, and SLAP tears — from acute pain and inflammation management through rotator cuff strengthening, scapular control, and return to overhead, throwing, and contact sport. Always follow your surgeon's post-operative protocol if you have had surgery.

RECOVERY TIMELINE

PHASE	TIMELINE	FOCUS	GOAL
Phase 1	Weeks 0–3	Pain control, pendulum mobility	Pain ≤ 2/10 at rest
Phase 2	Weeks 3–8	ROM restoration, early RC strength	Full ROM, 50% strength symmetry
Phase 3	Weeks 8–16	Progressive RC and scapular load	70% strength symmetry
Phase 4	Weeks 14–20	Sport-specific overhead/throwing	90% strength symmetry
Phase 5	Month 5+	Full sport return	Full clearance

SAFETY RULES

1. Pain during exercise must stay ≤ 3/10. Never push through sharp shoulder pain. 2. Avoid overhead reaching in Phase 1 unless specifically cleared. 3. No pushing, pulling, or throwing until Phase 3 minimum. 4. Sleep position: avoid lying directly on the injured shoulder. 5. Urgent assessment needed for: sudden complete loss of shoulder strength, numbness in the arm, or a visible deformity.

PHASE 1

Acute Pain Control and Early Mobility

Timeline: Weeks 0–3 · Goal: Reduce pain, prevent stiffness, maintain scapular awareness

01 Pendulum Circles (Codman Exercise)

Shoulder Joint
Mobility /
Decompression

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	20 circles each direction	Gravity only — no active shoulder movement	Slow rhythmic circles	60 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Stand beside a table or chair. Lean forward and support yourself with your unaffected arm.
2. Let the injured arm hang freely — completely relaxed.
3. Using gentle body sway (not shoulder muscles), begin moving the arm in small clockwise circles.
4. Gradually increase circle size as tolerated.
5. After 20 circles clockwise, reverse to 20 counterclockwise.
6. The motion comes from body movement — the shoulder is completely passive.
7. This exercise uses gravity to gently distract the humeral head, reducing impingement and stiffness.

COACHING CUES

- *The shoulder must be completely relaxed — if you feel your shoulder muscles working, you are using too much effort.*
- *Start with tiny circles. Bigger circles = more joint distraction = more benefit over time.*
- *Perform 3–4 times daily in the acute phase — it is one of the most effective early shoulder exercises.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When circles are pain-free at maximum comfortable size — begin assisted ROM.

02 Scapular Retraction and Depression

Scapular Stability
/ Upper Trap
Inhibition

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	15 reps × 3 sec hold	Bodyweight — seated or standing	3 sec hold / 2 sec return	60 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Sit or stand upright. Arms at your sides.
2. Gently draw your shoulder blades back toward each other — as if squeezing a pencil between them.

3. Simultaneously pull them downward — away from your ears.
4. Hold for 3 seconds at the end position.
5. Release slowly.
6. This exercise specifically activates the lower and middle trapezius while inhibiting the overactive upper trapezius — the most common imbalance in shoulder injuries.

COACHING CUES

- *Think: back and down. Not just back.*
- *Avoid shrugging — the shoulder blade movement should feel like it is moving away from your ears.*
- *This is the foundation of all shoulder rehabilitation — do it daily, permanently.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3×15 with 3-second hold is pain-free and consistent — begin banded exercises.

PHASE 2

ROM Restoration and Early Rotator Cuff Strength

Timeline: Weeks 3–8 · Goal: Full external rotation ROM, side-lying ER strength

03 Side-Lying External Rotation

Infraspinatus /
Teres Minor

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	15 reps	Bodyweight → 1–3 lb dumbbell	2 sec up / 2 sec down	60 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Lie on your unaffected side. Injured arm on top, elbow bent at 90°, upper arm along your side.
2. Place a small rolled towel between your elbow and waist — maintains neutral rotation starting position.
3. Keeping the elbow bent and pressed into the towel, slowly rotate your forearm upward toward the ceiling.
4. Rotate until your forearm is vertical — do not go further back.
5. Hold 2 seconds at the top.
6. Lower slowly back to starting position.
7. This exercise directly targets the most commonly torn rotator cuff muscle — the infraspinatus.

COACHING CUES

- *The elbow must stay pinned to the towel throughout — if it lifts, the deltoid is compensating.*
- *Tiny range with perfect mechanics beats large range with poor control.*
- *Compare the effort and range to your other side — aim for eventual symmetry.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3×15 with 3 lb dumbbell is easy and pain-free — begin standing cable ER.

04 Prone Y-T-W

Lower Trapezius /
Posterior
Shoulder

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	10 reps each position	Bodyweight → 1 lb plate in each hand	2 sec up / 3 sec lower	90 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Lie face down on a table or bench with your head off the edge. Arms hanging down.
2. Position Y: Raise both arms at a 45° angle above your head, thumbs pointing up. Hold 2 sec. Lower 3 sec.
3. Position T: Raise both arms straight out to your sides (90° from body). Thumbs up. Hold 2 sec. Lower 3 sec.

4. Position W: Bring elbows to 90° and raise upper arms to body height — like a goalpost. Squeeze shoulder blades. Hold 2 sec. Lower 3 sec.
5. Perform all three positions as one set. Rest 90 seconds between complete Y-T-W cycles.

COACHING CUES

- *All three positions target the lower trapezius — critical for scapular control and shoulder health.*
- *Lower slowly and deliberately — the eccentric phase builds the most strength.*
- *If you feel this in your neck or upper trap, reduce range and focus on the 'down and back' blade position.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3×10 each with 2 lb plates is pain-free — increase load by 0.5 lb.

PHASE 3

Progressive Load and Scapular Control

Timeline: Weeks 8–16 · Goal: 70% strength symmetry, push-ups pain-free, overhead progress

05 Cable Face Pull

Posterior Deltoid /
External Rotators
/ Scapular
Retraction

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	15 reps	Light → moderate cable weight	2 sec pull / 2 sec return	60 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Set a cable machine at face height. Attach a rope handle.
2. Stand facing the machine, hold the rope with both hands, palms facing each other.
3. Pull the rope toward your face, separating your hands as you pull.
4. Your elbows should finish above your hands, arms in a 'double bicep' position.
5. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and down at the end position.
6. Hold 1 second. Return slowly.
7. This exercise is one of the most important shoulder health exercises for any overhead athlete.

COACHING CUES

- *Elbows high at the finish — this is what makes the face pull effective.*
- *Do not let your head jut forward to meet the cable — keep your chin tucked.*
- *Use lighter weight than you think — technique breaks down quickly with load.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3×15 with moderate cable weight is pain-free — begin overhead pressing.

PHASE 4

Sport-Specific Overhead and Throwing Mechanics

Timeline: Weeks 14–20 · Goal: 90% strength symmetry, progressive throwing programme

06 Interval Throwing Programme (ITP)

Throwing
Mechanics / Arm
Load Progression

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
4–5 days/week	Progressive distance	Bodyweight throw	Sport-specific mechanics	Per session

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Begin at 30 feet distance. Warm up shoulder with 5 min of pendulums and band exercises.
2. Week 1: Toss at 30 feet, 25 throws, 75% effort. Every-other-day frequency.
3. Week 2: 45 feet, 25 throws, 75% effort.
4. Week 3: 60 feet, 30 throws, 80% effort.
5. Week 4: 90 feet, 30 throws, 80% effort.
6. Week 5: 120 feet, 30 throws, 85–90% effort.
7. Week 6+: Progress toward full competitive distance and effort based on sport demands.
8. Stop any session if elbow or shoulder pain exceeds 3/10.

COACHING CUES

- *Mechanics before velocity — no flat-out throws until Week 5 minimum.*
- *Ice the shoulder for 15 minutes after every session in the first 3 weeks.*
- *Pain above 3/10 at any point during a session = stop that session and repeat the previous week.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When you can throw at full distance and full effort for 3 consecutive sessions — sport return begins.

■ *This protocol is for throwing sports. Non-throwing overhead athletes: follow the overhead press progression instead.*

PHASE 5

Return to Elite Athletic Performance

Timeline: Month 5+ · Goal: Full unrestricted sport participation

07 Shoulder Maintenance Programme

Permanent
Prevention

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
2× per week	Ongoing	Various	As prescribed	As prescribed

HOW TO PERFORM

1. This programme continues permanently — integrate into your warm-up.
2. Scapular retraction and depression: 2×15 reps before every training session.
3. Band pull-aparts: 2×20 reps before every session.
4. Face pull: 3×15 with moderate weight, 2× per week.
5. Side-lying ER: 2×15 with 3 lb, 1× per week.
6. Prone Y-T-W: 2×10 each with 2 lb, 1× per week.
7. If shoulder symptoms return at any point: immediately drop back to Phase 2 exercises for 2 weeks.

COACHING CUES

- *Athletes who discontinue shoulder maintenance have a significantly higher recurrence rate.*
- *These exercises take 8–10 minutes — the return on investment is injury-free sport.*
- *A strong, well-balanced shoulder is built over years, not months.*

PROGRESS WHEN

This programme never ends.

RETURN TO SPORT — FINAL CLEARANCE CHECKLIST

- Pain 0/10 during all sport-specific movements for 3+ consecutive weeks
- Strength symmetry $\geq 90\%$ on external rotation testing vs. uninjured side
- Full range of motion equal to uninjured side
- Overhead pressing or throwing at full effort — pain-free for 2 consecutive sessions
- Interval throwing programme completed (for throwing athletes)
- Clearance from physiotherapist or sports medicine physician
- Shoulder maintenance programme integrated into weekly training