



# Shoulder Impingement: What You Can Do

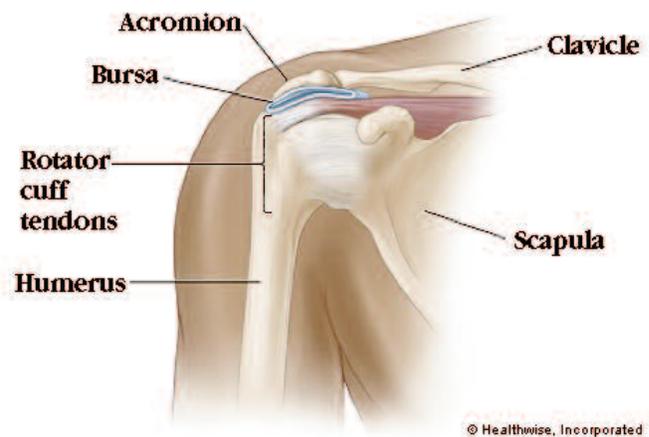
Pain in your shoulder is often a symptom of shoulder impingement. The pain is caused by compression of the structures within the shoulder as you raise your arm. As a result, the structures (bursa, rotator cuff tendons, and ligaments) become irritated and painful. This can lead to bursitis, tendonitis and other rotator cuff problems.

## What causes shoulder impingement syndrome?

- Repetitive motions overhead
- Poor rotator cuff muscle strength
- Poor posture and shoulder blade muscle strength
- Wear and tear changes within the shoulder joint or rotator cuff tendons
- Trauma (fall, lifting something too heavy)

## What can I do to ease my symptoms?

- Apply cold packs to your shoulder for 10-15 minutes 3-4 times each day to reduce pain.
- If sleeping on your side is painful, sleep on your back with a pillow under your arm or sleep on your unaffected side.
- Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Position your arm with the thumb pointed up when reaching for things.
- Put your coat and shirt on your affected arm first.
- Avoid activities that increase pain in your shoulder.



- Sit and stand with good posture.
- Participate in cardiovascular exercise such as walking for 30 minutes daily.
- Follow the exercises on page two. Stay consistent with your exercise program. Impingement tends to return if you don't continue your exercises.

## What can I do to prevent symptoms?

- Avoid sitting or standing with slumped (rounded) shoulders. This puts more compression on the tendons and bursa.
- Take regular breaks from repetitive activities.
- Lift and carry items close to your body.
- Avoid carrying a heavy purse or backpack on your affected shoulder.

# Shoulder Impingement (page 2)

## Gentle Exercises

These exercises can help you to move better and lessen your shoulder pain.

**Equipment needed:** Chair, towel, pillow, light weights.



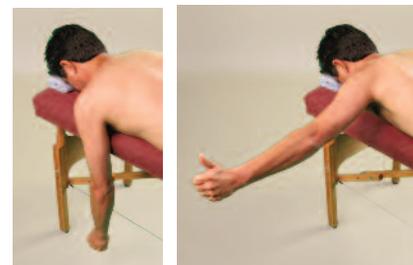
□ **Pendulum:** Bend forward at the hips so that your arm hangs down freely. Rock from your back foot to your front foot. Let your arm move in a circle, first clockwise, then counter-clockwise. Do this for 1 minute. Repeat this 3-5 times per day or more often if needed for pain relief.

□ **Shoulder blade setting:** Stand with your arms relaxed at your sides. Rotate palms outward so your thumbs rotate away from you. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and down. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Repeat 2 to 3 times. Repeat this 5 times per day or more often if needed for pain relief.



□ **Outward rotation – side lying:** Lie on the unaffected side with your upper arm at your side. You may want to place a pillow under your head. Keep your elbow bent and your thumb pointing up. Place a small folded towel under your elbow. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Raise your hand toward the ceiling as far as comfortable and then slowly lower. Keep your elbow at your side. Repeat 10-20 times, 2 times per day. Progress to holding a small weight as shown in the picture.

□ **Prone horizontal abduction:** Lie on your stomach (prone position) with forehead resting on a towel. Let your affected arm hang over the edge of bed. Start with palm facing forward, thumb out. Squeeze your shoulder blade while raising your arm out to the side, as far as comfortable. Slowly return to start position. Repeat 10-20 times, 2 times per day. Progress to holding a small weight.



□ **Scaption elevation:** Stand with your arms at your side and thumbs facing outward. Squeeze your shoulder blades together. Raise your arms forward and slightly to the side. Stop the movement when your arm reaches shoulder level or when you are just shy of feeling pain. Repeat 10-20 times, 2 times per day. Progress to holding a small weight.

Consult with your physical therapist or doctor if you experience an increase in your symptoms with recommended exercises, or if you develop new symptoms of numbness, tingling or a spread of the pain. This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand name: any similar products may be used.