

Shoulder Impingement/ Rotator Cuff (RC) Tendinopathy



Exploring the what, why and how with STRIVE Sport & Exercise Medicine



What is Shoulder Impingement?

Impingement or RC Tendinopathy are often used interchangeably, but we will refer to it as the former. The Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Teres Minor and Subscapularis make up the rotator cuff muscles. These muscles have multiple functions, one which includes stabilizing the arm bone (humerus) in the shoulder socket. If these muscles are not performing adequately it can cause the humerus to shift upwards and pinch the RC muscles. Shoulder blade position is also important for optimal shoulder movement. If your shoulder blade is not working together with your arm during movement, it can also lead to impingement.



Why did I get this?

Shoulder impingement will commonly develop through overloading the RC muscles. This can occur through work-related tasks such as frequently lifting objects overhead, or through sports that require overhead activities such as throwing. If we overload the RC muscles repeatedly without giving our bodies enough time to adapt to these loads, it can result in injury. Age and posture can also contribute to development of shoulder impingement and in rare cases, anatomical abnormalities of the shoulder blade can cause impingement.



How can I get better?

Exercise will be a very important part of your recovery. At the start, exercises will be initially targeted at stabilizing the shoulder blade. Achieving an ideal shoulder blade position is important to ensure proper movement of the arm. Exercises can then be performed to strengthen the rotator cuff muscles and the supporting muscles around the shoulder. As your pain decreases you can begin to gradually reintroduce more challenging activities back into your routine.

4 Exercises for you

Exercise: Resisted Wall Slide
Goal: Shoulder Blade Strength



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1. Stand in a good upright posture facing a wall with your elbows and hands resting on the wall and an elastic band wrapped around your forearm (not holding it in your hands).
 2. Begin by creating slack in the band by sliding your left arm in, then in an upward diagonal motion slide your left arm away from your body (keeping your right arm still). Repeat this on the right side as you slide your arms up and down the wall.
- Parameters:** 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Perform once per day, 2-3 times per week.

Exercise: Side Lying Shoulder Circles
Goal: Rotator Cuff Strengthening



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1. Lie on your side with the top leg bent and rest your head on your arm.
 2. Hold a small weight directly over your shoulder with the arm straight.
 3. Make very small circles with your arm in one direction. After 10 circles, switch and make 10 small circles in the other direction.
- Parameters:** 3 sets of 10 circles each way. Perform once per day, 2-3 times per week.

Exercise: Shoulder Blade Push-Ups
Goal: Shoulder Blade Strength

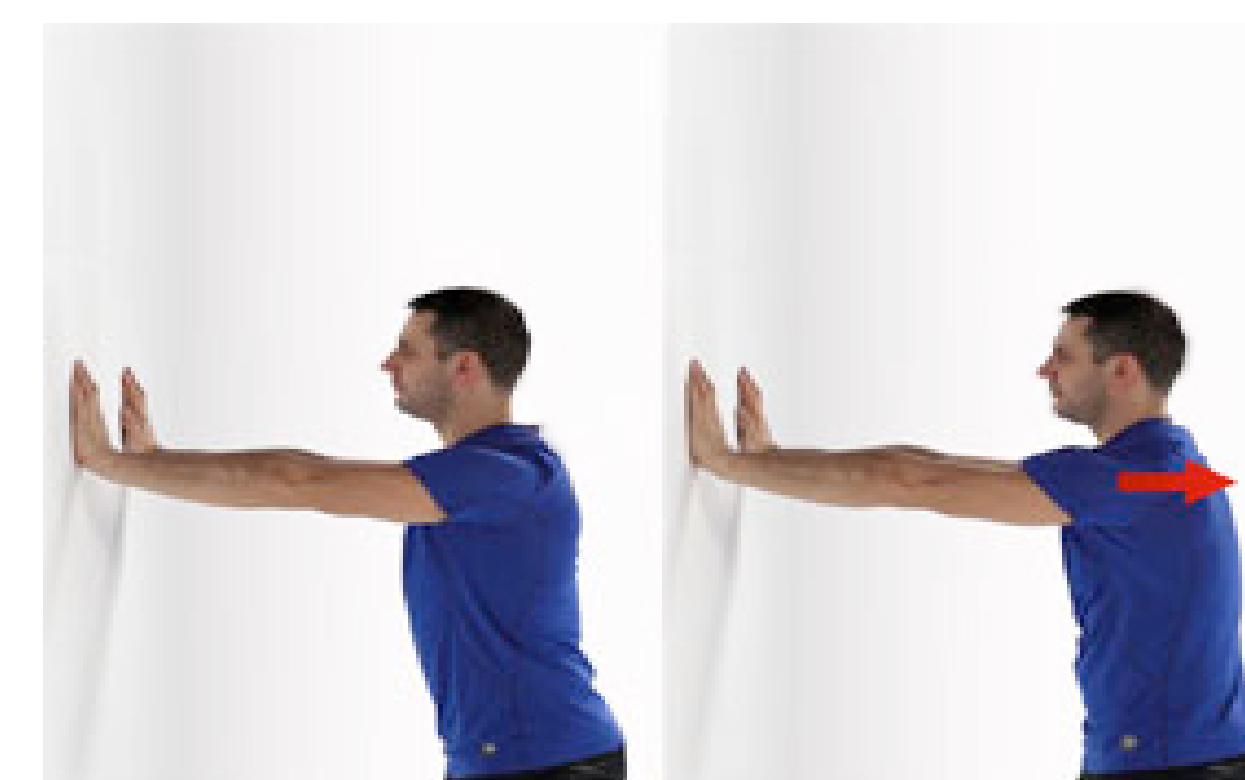


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1. Stand facing a wall and put your hands against the wall with your elbows straight.
 2. Move your trunk forwards. Your shoulder blades should squeeze together. Then push into your hands to move your trunk backwards. Your shoulder blades should spread apart.
 3. Make sure you don't arch your back when you do this movement.
- Parameters:** 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Perform once per day, 2-3 times per week.