

Shoulder Strains

Diagnosis Explanation:

A **shoulder strain** occurs when the **muscles or tendons around the shoulder joint are overstretched or torn**, usually due to **overuse, repetitive overhead motions, poor posture, or sudden lifting movements**. It commonly affects the **rotator cuff muscles** and **deltoid**.

Symptoms:

- **Pain and tenderness** in the shoulder, especially with movement.
- **Stiffness and weakness**, making lifting difficult.
- **Swelling or mild bruising** in the affected area.
- **Pain at night** or after prolonged activity.

Specific Work Modifications:

- **If your job requires standing or walking:** Avoid **carrying weight on the injured side** and take **breaks to rest the arm**.
- **If your job involves lifting:** Avoid **lifting, pushing, pulling, or repetitive overhead movements**. Use **both hands when possible**.
- **If your job is desk-based:** Keep the **shoulder supported**, avoid **leaning on the affected arm**, and take **posture breaks every 30 minutes**.
- **Avoid:** Overhead reaching, repetitive shoulder use, and carrying heavy loads.

Specific Activity Modifications:

- **If you play sports:** Avoid **throwing, swimming strokes, or overhead racket sports** until fully healed.
- **If you do weightlifting:** Avoid **bench presses, overhead presses, dips, and pull-ups**; instead, focus on **controlled, pain-free movements**.
- **If you do yoga or Pilates:** Modify poses to **avoid excessive shoulder stretching, deep rotation, or weight-bearing on the arms**.
- **Avoid:** High-impact activities, repetitive overhead motions, and exercises that cause discomfort.

Recommended Supplements:

- **Collagen Peptides** - 10g daily for muscle and tendon repair.
- **Vitamin C** - 500mg daily to support collagen synthesis.
- **Glucosamine & Chondroitin** - 1500mg/1200mg daily for joint and tendon health.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** - 1000mg daily to reduce inflammation.
- **Turmeric (Curcumin)** - 500-1000mg daily for natural pain relief.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration:

- **Increase Lean Protein** (chicken, fish, tofu, eggs) to support muscle healing.
- **Eat Anti-Inflammatory Foods** (berries, leafy greens, turmeric, nuts) to reduce swelling.
- **Consume Hydrating Foods** (cucumber, watermelon, citrus) to maintain tendon flexibility.
- **Limit Processed Foods & Sugars** to prevent inflammation.
- **Hydration:** Drink **8-10 cups of water daily** to support muscle function and recovery.

Home Exercise Prescription (Rehabilitation for Shoulder Strains)

Early Phase (0-2 Weeks, Reducing Pain & Protecting the Joint):

- **RICE Protocol** - Rest, Ice (15-20 min, 3x/day), Compression, Elevation.
- **Pendulum Exercises** - Lean forward, let the arm hang, gently swing in small circles, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Scapular Squeezes** - Pinch shoulder blades together, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Isometric Shoulder Holds** - Press palm against a wall without moving the shoulder, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Strengthening Phase (2-6 Weeks, Improving Stability & Mobility):

- **Wall Walks (Forward and Lateral)** - Use fingers to "walk" the arm up the wall, hold **5 seconds**, repeat **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **External Rotation with Resistance Band** - Keep elbow at **90 degrees**, rotate forearm outward, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Internal Rotation with Resistance Band** - Keep elbow at **90 degrees**, rotate forearm inward, **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Advanced Phase (6+ Weeks, Preventing Recurrence & Maintaining Mobility):

- **Lateral Arm Raises (Light Resistance)** - Raise arms to shoulder height, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Scapular Stability Exercises (Resistance Band Rows)** - Pull resistance band toward chest, **10 reps, 2x/day**.
- **Modified Push-Ups (Wall or Knees)** - Maintain control, **10 reps, 2x/day**.

Helpful Books:

1. *The Shoulder Pain Solution: Simple Exercises to Prevent and Recover from Injury* - John M. Kirsch, MD.
2. *Overcoming Shoulder Pain: A Guide to Rehabilitation and Recovery* - Peter T. J. Barrett.

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.