

# Physiotherapy: Anterior Deltoid Muscle Exercises for Rotator Cuff Tears

**Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy  
Community & Therapy Services**

**This leaflet has been designed  
explain the benefits of the  
treatment activity you have been  
taught, act as a reminder of  
technique and who to contact with  
any questions.**



# Information for patients and visitors

## Introduction

You have recently been seen by the Physiotherapist and taught techniques to help manage your condition. This leaflet is designed to remind you of the correct technique and any personalised advice given during the session.

## What is a Rotator Cuff Tear?

The Rotator Cuff is a group of muscles located in your shoulder. These muscles attach to the Shoulder Blade and the Humerus (the bone at the top of your arm) and allow movement at your shoulder. As a result of sudden trauma or prolonged overuse and wear and tear, these muscles become damaged and can tear, this is known as a rotator cuff tear.

A tear to the Rotator Cuff means you are no longer able to easily lift your arms above 90 degrees. However, there is another powerful muscle on the outside of your arm, called the Deltoid muscle, which you can strengthen in order to compensate for the torn Rotator Cuff.

## Anterior Deltoid Programme

The following exercises should be done 3 to 5 times a day to strengthen your Deltoid muscle. The aim is to reduce your pain and improve both the range of movement at your arm and your arm function.

These exercises must be done for at least 12 weeks and must always be performed lying down to begin with so that the effect of gravity is reduced.

## Exercises

1. Whilst standing, bend forward and let your arm dangle free. Perform gentle pendulum movements with your arm for about 5 minutes. This will help to relieve pain and will loosen the muscles around your shoulder.



2. Lie down flat on your back, with a pillow supporting your head.
  - a. Raise your weak arm to 90 degrees vertical, using the stronger arm to assist if necessary. The elbow should be straight and in line with your ear.



- b. Hold your arm in this upright position with its own strength.



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- c. Slowly, keeping your fingers, wrist and elbow straight, move the arm forwards and backwards in line with the outside of the leg. Keep the movement smooth and gentle, continue for around 5 minutes or until you become tired. Repeat with each arm.
3. As you get more confident in controlling your shoulder movement, gradually increase the range of movement at your shoulder, until you are able to move your arm from side of your thigh to above your head, touching the bed behind your head and then back down to your leg. Keep the movement smooth and continuous for 5 minutes or until you feel tired.
5. Once you are able to complete Exercise 4 with confidence, the next task is to progress to being able to complete the previous exercises whilst sitting and eventually whilst standing. At this stage, start by slowly raising your body into a more upright position by either raising the head of the bed or by putting some pillows underneath your back to raise your position up.



4. Once you are able to complete Exercise 3. Repeat Exercise 2 and 3 with a lightweight object, e.g. a tin of beans or a small paperweight, held in the affected hand.



6. This time the exercises (2 and 3) will be completed against gravity as a resistance rather than a lightweight (the element of raising your body position using pillows means the resistance of gravity is working against your body). Start from the beginning of Exercise 2 with your body raised slightly.
7. First, start without any weights and progress to use the same lightweight you used before in the lying down position (in Exercise 4).

**Remember to stop exercising if your pain increases or you feel unwell.**

### References

Further information is available on:  
[www.shoulderdoc.co.uk](http://www.shoulderdoc.co.uk)

## Information for patients and visitors

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### Contact Details for Further Information

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy  
Department, Diana Princess of Wales  
Hospital

01472 875276

Musculoskeletal Team, Physiotherapy  
Department, Scunthorpe General Hospital

01724 290010

### Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

#### For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

#### For Scunthorpe General Hospital

Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

[nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

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