

# Inpatient exercises – rotator cuff & stabilisation

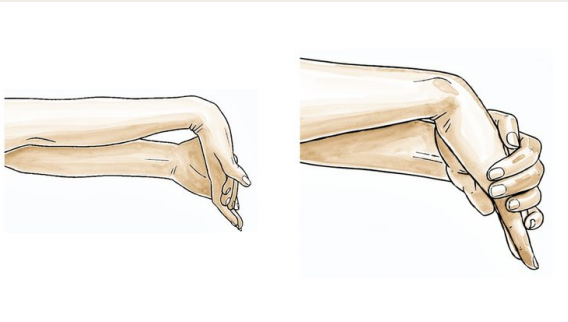


Early in-hospital exercises after rotator cuff repair or stabilisation.

Kieran Hirpara 4.0

These are the gentle exercises to begin in hospital after a rotator cuff repair or a shoulder stabilisation. They keep the hand, elbow and shoulder moving while the repair heals.

## Your exercises

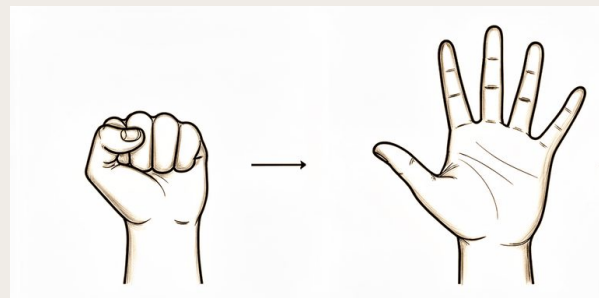


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### Wrist movement

Keep your hand moving by bending your wrist forwards, backwards and side to side.

**10 times, 3 times per day**

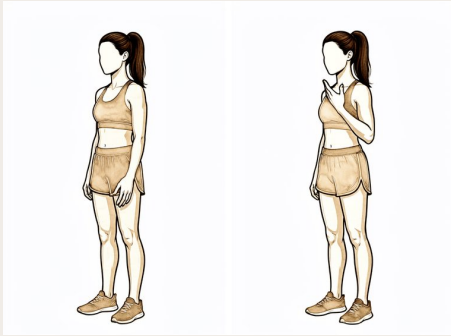


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### Open and close hand

Keep your hand and fingers moving by opening and closing them, or by squeezing a stress ball.

**10 times, 3 times per day**

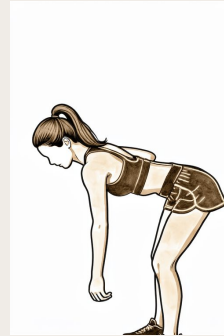


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### Elbow bends

Bend and straighten your elbow.

**10 times, 3 times per day**

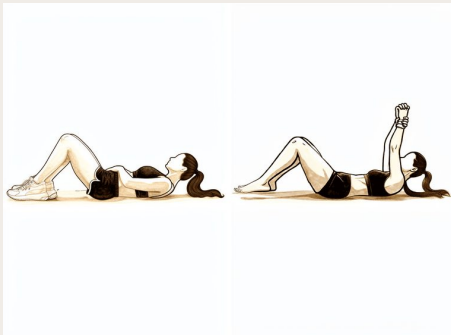


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### Pendulums

This is a passive exercise. Lean forward and let your arm relax down. Use your body to move the arm gently either clockwise or anti-clockwise, along with forwards, backwards and side to side.

**About 30 seconds each way, 3 times per day**



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### Assisted forward flexion

Sitting on a chair and leaning forward, cradle your operated arm with the other arm and gently move it upwards in front of you. Lower it back down with the help of your non-operated arm. You could also lie on your back in bed and help the arm upwards if you prefer.

**10 times, 3 times per day**

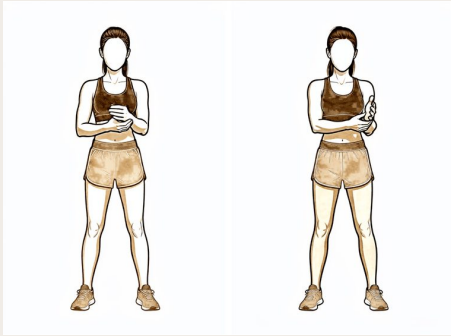


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### Assisted abduction

Sitting on a chair and leaning forward, cradle the arm again and help it out to the side (like rocking a baby).

**10 times, 3 times per day**

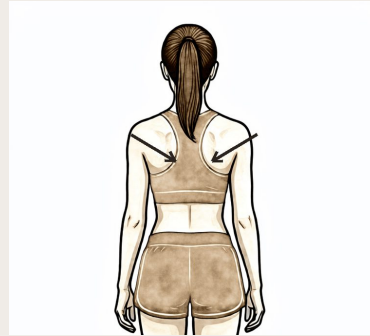


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### External rotation

Sitting on a chair, only move your arm from where it sits in the sling to pointing straight in front of you. Don't go further outwards.

**10 times, 3 times per day**

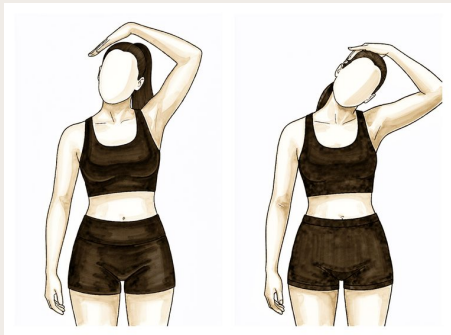


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### Lower trapezius setting

Squeeze your shoulder blades downwards and together.

**Hold 5 seconds, 5 times, 3 times per day**



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### Upper trapezius stretch

Use your non-operated arm to bring your ear towards your shoulder, away from the operated side.

**Hold 10 seconds, 3 times, 3 times per day**



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### Levator scapulae stretch

Use your non-operated arm to bring your nose towards your armpit area, away from the operated side.

**Hold 10 seconds, 3 times, 3 times per day**

Begin these gentle exercises in hospital and continue them at home. They should be comfortable – ease back if pain increases.

## Wearing your sling

- You are allowed to take your arm out of the sling for your exercises and for showering.

### CQ HAND + UPPER LIMB

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- You need to wear your sling for 6 weeks, especially when out of the house.
- You don't need to sleep in the sling.
- Use ice for pain relief if needed.
- When wearing your sling, relax your shoulder and let the sling take the weight of your arm.
- Take your painkillers before you do your exercises, and before your physiotherapy appointments.
- Unless you have arranged your own physiotherapy, an appointment has been made for you and is detailed in your discharge pack.
- If you have any problems, contact the rooms or let your physiotherapist know.

## When you go home

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Once you are home, your recovery continues with the full rehabilitation protocol for your operation: [rotator cuff repair](#); [anterior stabilisation & Latarjet](#); [posterior stabilisation](#).

## After your protocol

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These early exercises are the in-hospital starting point shared by rotator cuff repair and shoulder stabilisation – they keep the hand, elbow and shoulder gently moving while the repair is protected. The doses are typical rather than fixed, and your ongoing rehabilitation is guided individually by your physiotherapist, working with the practice, based on how your shoulder recovers. This page works alongside the practice's general recovery advice – see [managing post-operative pain](#) and [wound care](#). The full, operation-specific course continues in your own protocol (linked above). The evidence behind this early phase – the early-versus-delayed motion research after cuff repair and the immobilisation evidence after stabilisation – is summarised in the evidence section, available as a PDF from the top of this page.