

Inpatient exercises – shoulder replacement

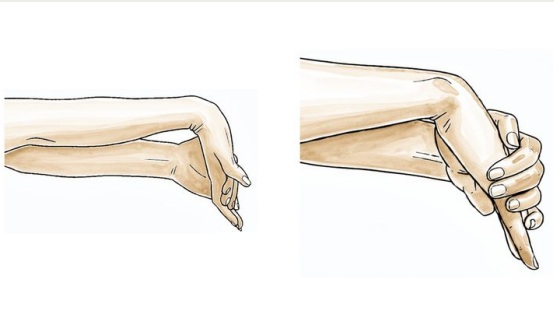
Early in-hospital exercises after a shoulder replacement.

Kieran Hirpara 4.0



These are the gentle exercises to begin in hospital after your shoulder replacement (total, reverse, or replacement for a fracture). They keep the hand, elbow and shoulder moving while the repair settles.

Your exercises

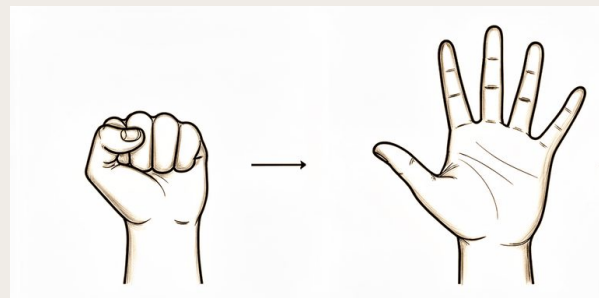


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Wrist movement

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

10 times, 3 times per day

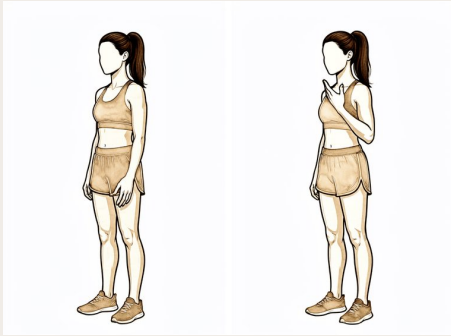


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Open and close hand

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

10 times, 3 times per day

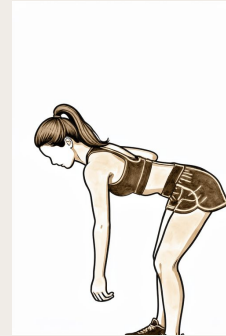


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Elbow bends

Bend and straighten your elbow.

10 times, 3 times per day

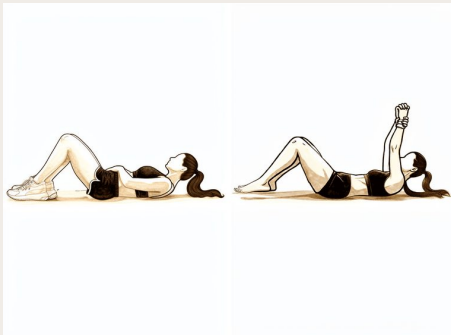


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Pendulums

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

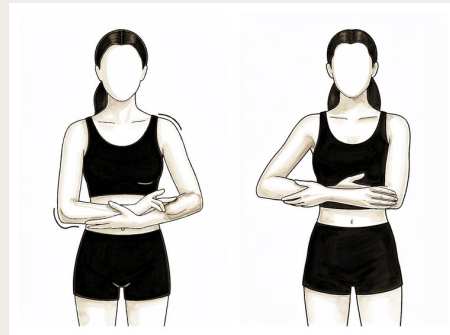


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Assisted forward flexion

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

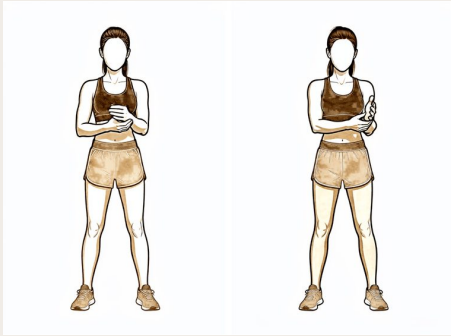


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Assisted abduction

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

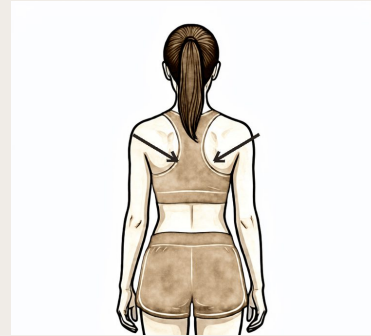


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External rotation

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

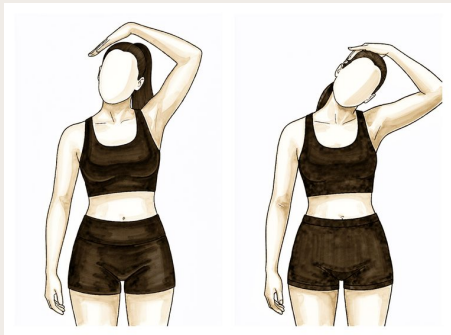


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Lower trapezius setting

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

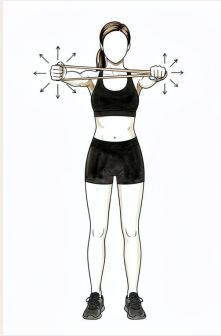


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Levator scapulae stretch

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



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Rhythmic stabilisation

With your arm supported in front of you at about shoulder height, have your physiotherapist (or your good hand) apply small, gentle pushes from different directions while you hold the arm still and steady — do not let it move. This trains the shoulder's stabilising muscles to react. Keep all the efforts gentle.

As guided by your physiotherapist

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

If you had a **reverse** replacement, you can start moving the shoulder early — begin with assisted and gravity-assisted movements (easiest lying on your back, letting gravity help), then add gentle active movement as your comfort allows, staying within what feels comfortable. Just keep clear of the positions to avoid listed under “Wearing your sling.”

If you had a **total (anatomic)** replacement or a **replacement for a fracture**, keep your early movements assisted and gentle as shown — let your other arm do the work, and don't push the operated arm outwards past where the exercises ask, so the healing repair at the front of the shoulder is protected.

Wearing your sling

How long you wear the sling depends on which replacement you had — please follow the rule for your operation.

If you had a reverse replacement:

- The sling is mainly for comfort and support, and you'll wear it for about **2 weeks** rather than full-time for 6 weeks.
- You can take your arm out of the sling for your exercises and for showering.
- You can start gentle shoulder movements straight away (see your exercises) — there's no need to keep the arm completely still.

CQ HAND + UPPER LIMB

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- There are a few positions to avoid in the early weeks while everything settles: don't reach your arm behind your body or behind your back, don't combine reaching backwards with turning the arm inwards, don't lift anything, and don't push up through your hands (for example, pushing yourself up out of a chair). Your physiotherapist will go through these with you.

If you had a total (anatomic) replacement, or a replacement for a fracture:

- You need to sleep in the sling.
- You are allowed to take your arm out of the sling for your exercises and for showering.
- You need to wear your sling for 6 weeks, especially when out of the house.
- A repair at the front of your shoulder needs time to heal, so your early movements are gentler and more guarded – keep to the assisted exercises shown and don't force the arm outwards past where the exercises ask.

For everyone:

- 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

Once you are home, your recovery continues with the full rehabilitation protocol for your operation: [reverse shoulder replacement](#); [total shoulder replacement](#); [shoulder replacement for fracture](#).

The evidence behind this early in-hospital phase – why the sling and gentle movements matter, why a reverse replacement can move early and freely (with the main caution being to keep the arm from reaching behind the body), and why a total replacement is more guarded with external rotation limited to protect the repair at the front of the shoulder – is summarised in the evidence section, available as a PDF from the top of this page.