

Self-Awareness

One of the hallmarks of musculoskeletal pain is a loss of control. This exercise will help you regain control. Most people find that when they are stressed out their shoulders raise up around you ears (figure A). If you find yourself in this stressful position a good way to take control again is to raise your shoulder even higher, as in figure B, and then drop them. By doing this you re-assert your control over your unconscious mind and begin to reset and release your tightened shoulder muscles.



Acupressure

Use the fingers of your hand to apply a deep pressure into the muscle. The pressure needs to be to the “feather’s edge” of discomfort. You will find that as the discomfort diminishes you can apply more pressure until you reach the point that there is no longer any discomfort. At that point the muscle has relaxed enough to allow you to advance in your rehabilitation program.



Seated Stretch

Stretching this muscle can be done anytime that you find yourself seated. Just use the tight side hand to grab the back edge of a seat and lean toward your opposite knee. If this feels good, then more might be better. So, take your free hand and place it on your head behind your ear. Put just enough pressure using the hand on your head to stretch the muscle. Do not put yourself in pain! We like to think of it as enough pressure to go to the “feather’s edge” of discomfort

Next take 3 deep breaths. As you inhale each time the muscle will tighten. Maintain your stretch into the increased tension. As you exhale each time the muscle will relax. Follow the muscle relaxation to the feather’s edge of discomfort.

Using ice or heat for 15 minutes prior to this stretch is ideal, but not always possible. So you can do this when you are fresh out of the shower (bath or whirlpool) or in the shower (either seated or standing using a shower bar). This can even be done after alternating heat or ice for a few minutes each resulting in a total of around 15 minutes. Experimenting on what works best for you is half the fun!



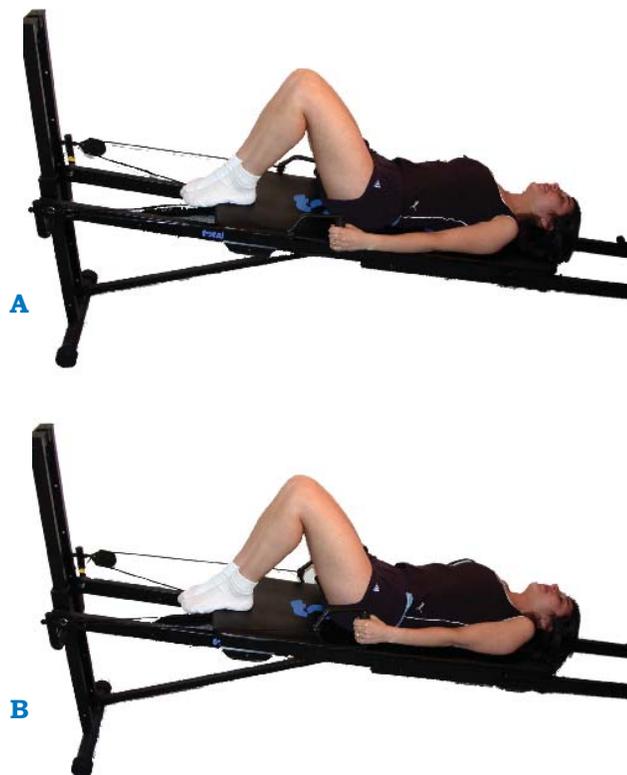
Do's and Don't's

- Do not carry heavy bags on the affected side or light bags for prolonged periods
- Avoid activities that involve turning the head in one direction for long periods
 - Do not use a computer with the monitor angled to one side
 - Avoid watching a sporting event or movie from the corner or front row
- Do not use a cane that is too long
- Do not use a phone cocked to the ear (try a headset)
- Avoid sleeping in uncomfortable positions, as in a plane or car (try a neck rest)
- Avoid exposure to a cool drafts on the back of the neck (don't be shy to move or put on a turtle neck)

Shoulder shrugs with light weights are a great exercise to strengthen and stretch the levator scapula muscle. Starting in the standing position with not more than 5 lb weights in your hands and with your arms at your sides (pictured at right) bring your shoulders straight up into the shrug position (pictured at far right) while completely inhaling. Then slowly lower your shoulders as you exhale completely. Repeat this action for a total of 8-12 times, take a 30-90 second break and repeat as directed by your physician for a total of 3 sets.



Start by lying flat on your back in the position pictured in figure A. Allow the machine to pull your shoulders downward in a good stretch. Then shrug your shoulders toward your ears, as pictured in figure B, while you completely exhale. Then slowly allow your shoulders to be stretched downward by the machine as you exhale completely. Repeat this action for a total of 8-12 times, take a 30-90 second break and repeat as directed by your physician for a total of 3 sets.



Also, Train

- Deltoid muscles
- Pectoralis muscles
- Trapezius muscles
- Latissimus dorsi muscles
- Rotator cuff muscles