

# Scapular and Shoulder Blade Pain



Scan this QR Code to access a detailed video that enhances the information in this handout. It includes step by step guidance and visual demonstrations for each exercise.

## What causes scapular pain?

Pain around the shoulder blade often results from myofascial trigger points, also known as muscle knots. These knots cause muscles to tighten, harden, and become painful. Factors contributing to their formation include injury, poor posture, repetitive movements, chronic tension, or even a poor night's sleep.

## How is it treated?

Treating trigger points effectively requires a multimodal approach. Applying heat can enhance blood flow and relax muscles. Daily stretching of the affected muscles improves mobility and range of motion. Engaging in aerobic exercises, like walking or stationary bike, enhances circulation and reduces pain. Additionally, using a massage ball for acupressure therapy can help break up the muscle knots.

## How to prevent shoulder blade and scapular pain?

Maintain good posture and avoid repetitive motions that strain the shoulder muscles. Regularly stretching and strengthening the muscles around the shoulder can help reduce tension and prevent the formation of myofascial trigger points. Incorporating movement breaks throughout the day and practicing relaxation techniques can also alleviate chronic tension.



# Scapular Pain Stretches & Exercises

Consistent stretching can accelerate recovery and prevent recurrence. The following stretching regimen can be done in 5 minutes and should be done 2-3 times daily.

## Active Warm Up

### Shoulder Roll Forward

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Keep your arms relaxed at your side. Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders forward making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



### Shoulder Roll Backward

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Keep your arms relaxed at your side. Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders backwards making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



### Scapular Squeezes

- Objective: increase blood flow, loosen the shoulder muscles
- Start with your arms at your side. Pull your shoulder blades towards each other and squeeze for 1-2 seconds before returning to the starting position.
- Do this 10 times.



### Shoulder Blade Stretches

#### Anterior Chest Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of chest and anterior shoulder
- Clasp your hands behind your back and lift backwards and upwards. Pull your shoulders back to deepen the stretch.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



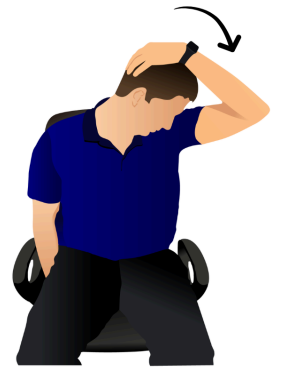
### Upper Trapezius Stretch

- Sit with your shoulders relaxed. Keep your right hand next to your side and gently tilt your head to your left, bringing your ear towards your left shoulder. Enhance the stretch by applying gentle pressure with your left hand on top of your head.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.



### Levator Scapula Stretch

- Sit with your shoulders relaxed. Turn your head to a 45 degree angle towards the left. Gently lower your chin towards your chest and aim it towards the armpit. Use your left hand to gently press down on your head. Put your right hand behind your back for a deeper stretch.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.



### Rhomboid Stretch

- Bring your hands together and push outwards. As you push outwards, slowly curl your upper back into a ball and tuck your chin into your chest. You will feel a stretch in your upper back between your shoulder blades.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



### Seated Trunk Rotation Stretch

- Sit facing forward and then rotate your chest about 90 degrees. Use your hands and hold on to a seat or back of the chair to help you rotate your body even more. You will feel a stretch along your thoracic spine.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.

