



Working together to achieve the healthiest life possible for everyone in Ayrshire and Arran

Thoracic strengthening exercises

Strengthening exercises have been shown to increase thoracic movement, reduce pain and build strength.

Exercise one: Arms overhead squat

Level one



Go into a squat position leaning against a wall or closed door. Keep your arms straight and lift them up and over your head. Return the arms to chest level then repeat.

Do 10 repetitions, three times per day.

Level two

Do the exercise as above whilst holding onto a weight. You should move the arms in a slow and controlled fashion at all times during the exercise.

Exercise two: Bar squat



Level one

Rest a pole, walking stick or something similar on your shoulders behind your head. Then slowly bend both knees and lower your bottom down towards the floor. Try to keep your head facing forwards. Then slowly straighten up and squeeze your bottom and pelvic floor muscles.

Do 15 repetitions, three times per day.

Level two

This exercise can be made more difficult by using a weighted object or bar.

Exercise three: Shoulder and thoracic spine strengthening

Level one



Lie on the floor on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Lift arms straight out in front of you with palms facing up. Then lift arms up over your head slowly until you feel a stretch, or you can go no further, hold for a few seconds then return to the starting position.

Do 10 repetitions, three times per day.

Level two

Do the exercise as above whilst holding a weight in each hand or using a weighted bar. Move the weights slowly and in a controlled fashion at all times.

Exercise four: Arm lift exercise

Level one



Lie on your stomach on the floor or a bed. Arms should be raised above your shoulders out at an angle of approximately 45 degrees. Lift arms up towards the ceiling as comfortable. Hold for three seconds and slowly lower to starting position.

Do 10 repetitions.

Level two

This exercise can be made harder by doing the exercise with weights. Always be in control of the weights performing the exercise slowly and in control

Exercise five: Bird-dog exercise

Level one



Get onto the floor or a bed in the four point kneeling position. Knees can be supported by a pillow. Hands should be under your shoulders on the floor or bed, and knees on the floor directly under your hips. Take one leg out straight behind you. Point your toes. Then reach out forwards with the opposite arm above your head.

Aim to hold this position, without body “wobble” or overarching of your back, for 10 seconds, then slowly return to the start position.

Level two

The above exercise can be made more difficult by holding for progressively longer periods of time and by doing more repetitions.

Exercise six: Thoracic spine rotation in kneeling

Level one



Go into the kneeling position. It is important there is no slouching of the mid back so try to maintain a mid-position of the low back. Lift one arm straight up and behind you towards the ceiling. Hold few seconds then in a controlled manner return to start position. Do for 10 repetitions, three times a day with each arm.

Level two

Once you have mastered the movement of the exercise above you can make this harder by holding a weight in the moving arm. Always maintain a slow and controlled movement whilst holding a weight.