

TRI This!

STRENGTH TRAINING FOR TRIATHLETES

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Injury Prevention Exercises for the Rotator Cuff

The shoulder is one of the most flexible joints of the body. This flexibility makes various athletic movements of the arm possible, such as throwing a baseball, swinging a golf club or tennis racket, and swimming in the pool. The shoulder joint is highly susceptible to injury from these repetitive athletic movements. If the surrounding muscles of the shoulder (pectorals, trapezius, deltoids, and latissimus) and deep rotator-cuff muscle tissue become weak, the shoulder joint will become a candidate for inflammation and structural tissue damage. Worst case scenario? Surgery and months of rehabilitation. Talk about a setback to your triathlon season!

The rotator cuff consists of four muscles in the shoulder that provide the joint with the proper stability to perform movements as easy as reaching into the cupboard to swimming various arm strokes in the pool. These muscles (Teres Minor, Infraspinatus, Supraspinatus, and Subscapularis) can be strengthened through many different exercises, with anything from rubber resistance to dumbbells. Let's look at two exercises that will keep your swim stroke from crippling your season plans.



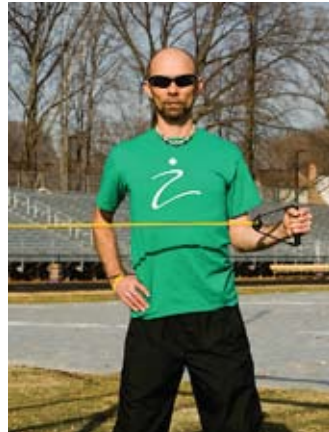
Internal Rotation, Tubing, Start



Internal Rotation, Tubing, Finish



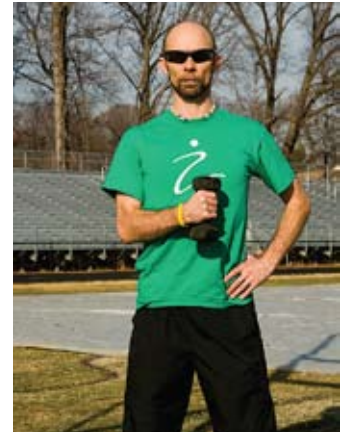
External Rotation, Tubing, Start



External Rotation, Tubing, Finish



Dumbbell Rotation



Dumbbell Rotation

Shoulder Internal Rotation / External Rotation

2 sets, 10 repetitions, 2 days per week

Internal Rotation

1. You will need a light dumbbell (DB) or rubber resistance (RR) tube to perform this exercise. This exercise can be performed standing or seated.
2. If using rubber resistance, anchor the tube or band to a pole or stair rail, or anything else that will allow you to tie one end of the tube in place.
3. Hold the DB / RR in your hand, thumbs up position. Tuck your elbow against your ribs. Start your movement at 45 degrees to the outside of your shoulder. Start with your arm in an "L" shape and maintain a stiff arm through the following movement.
4. Pull the DB / RR across your body to your belly button; you should experience resistance here. At the end of the movement, your hand should be slightly in front of your belly, "L" shaped, and thumb up. Hold the resistance for 1 second in this position.
5. Return to the start position slowly, applying your own resistance. DO NOT allow your arm to snap back to start position. Remember to stop at 45 degrees.

External Rotation

1. Using the same equipment, start this movement from just in front of your belly button, thumb up, "L" shaped arm, and elbow tucked to ribs.
2. Pull the resistance slowly to 45 degrees outside your shoulder. Stop and hold the resistance for 1 second.
3. Return to the start position slowly, applying your own resistance. Again, do not allow your hand to snap back to the start position.

Bill Hall is a AAAI/ISMA Certified Personal Trainer and Team Z's Strength and Conditioning Coach. He is an Advanced Personal Trainer for Country Club Fitness at Westwood Country Club in Vienna, VA. Bill began the sport of triathlon with Team In Training and Team Z. As a Team Z coach, Bill is responsible for developing and maintaining the strength training programs of Team Z athletes. Bill holds a Master's Degree in Health Promotion, is certified as a Kid's and Youth fitness trainer, and works with a variety of athletes from beginner to advanced. Bill's clients include those with weight loss goals, tennis players, golfers, triathletes, and runners. Contact Bill via e-mail at hobbit08@aol.com (yes, that's his favorite book). ★