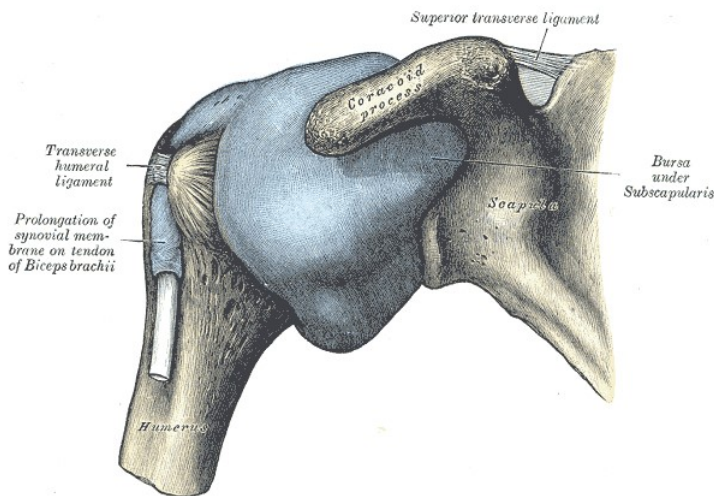


Better Blades

A Simple Routine That Abolishes Shoulder Pain

Many fitness clients ask me for help with shoulder pain. They report long histories of recurrent bouts of shoulder ache and soreness. Prior treatment is the usual trip through oral medications, then the injections, then surgery, and finally some physical therapy. Symptoms recede for a period of time and then return—for no apparent reason. They are tired of shoulder pain and they want some answers. This series of rehabilitative exercises has been the answer for many of these long suffering shoulders. Read the rest of this article and watch the demonstration video.

Waking the Lazy Worker



We look at two big joints when we evaluate a shoulder. The articulation of the humerus with a portion of the scapula is the glenohumeral joint. The other is the scapulo-thoracic joint—the articulation of the shoulder blade with the rib cage that acts as a

mobile platform for the entire shoulder complex. Most clients have been given exercises that mobilize, stretch, and strengthen the glenohumeral joint. Despite the presence of pain, our evaluation often reveals a glenohumeral joint that moves well and functions appropriately. When we move up the chain to the scapulo-thoracic joint, we frequently find glaring limitations in mobility and coordination. Scapulo-thoracic joint dysfunction is the all too often driver of chronic shoulder pain in the glenohumeral joint. If you have two people performing a physically demanding job, it is never the guy laying down on the job that complains—it is the worker carrying the extra load.

Scapulo-Thoracic Reboot

These exercises should never increase your shoulder pain. If your shoulder is already sore and the pain stays the same after the exercise, it is not a concern. Many fitness clients report shoulder pain resolves with four weeks of daily training on this program. If the pain only reduces 25-30%, it is still a victory. You just need the observant eyes and skilled hands of a physical therapist, specialized in orthopedics, to guide you through a more in depth program of rehabilitation.



Fall Is On It's Way!

Fall is quickly approaching and we've added some exciting new training programs. Whether you are a student athlete looking for sports specific training, a senior who is ready to get started on an exercise program, or just need to jump start your routine, there's a program for you. See page three for more details.

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Fenton Fitness and Athletic Center

Effort and Expectations

These are not the only exercise activities that will improve scapulo-thoracic function, but in my experience, they are the ones you can learn without the need of coaching. You can read the instructions and watch the video and be successful. You need to perform the exercises every day and give the program at least six weeks of sustained effort. Neuromotor research has taught us that it takes many repetitions to reboot a faulty motor control pattern. You are unlikely to resolve shoulder pain with less than daily performance.

HEAD STILL DRILL

Many people have developed an abnormal motor control pattern we call “upper trap dominance”. This condition locks down the scapula and imparts greater stress on the glenohumeral joint structures. It also is a primary driver of head and neck pain. Take this simple test: Lift your arm up overhead and adjacent to your head. Does your head jut forward—test failed. You should be able to raise your arm next to your head and keep the neck relaxed and head stationary. The *head still drill* develops appropriate neural control of the neck and scapula muscles.



You will need a light medicine ball and a mirror. Stand with feet shoulder width apart and hold a ball against your abdomen at belly button level. Keep your elbows by your sides and shoulder blades pulled back. Lengthen your neck to a tall and tight position.

Visualize that your arms, shoulders, pelvis, and the ball are firmly glued to one another. Watch yourself in the mirror and focus on the tip of your nose. Rotate the ball and your torso to the right and keep the tip of your nose from moving. Stay focused on maintaining a still head and then rotate back to the starting position. Reset and rotate to the left and keep the nose still. Work on producing a smooth rotation while eliminating as much head motion as possible.

It takes lots of repetitions to improve a faulty motor control pattern. Try two sets of twenty. This is a good warm up drill prior to your golf or tennis game. There is no value to using a heavier medicine ball—stay on the light side and work on improving the distance and the speed of your turns while keeping the head stationary.

FOUR POINT THORACIC SPINE ROTATION

For the shoulder to function at optimal levels, the scapula (shoulder blade) must be able to travel across a mobile rib cage. Our new dependence on tech has downloaded a musculoskeletal virus into our posture that welds the thoracic spine into a question mark. A fixed rib cage puts the muscles that control the scapula into a stupor. It is the equivalent of what prolonged sitting does to your glutes. The four-point thoracic spine rotation drill will improve scapula mobility and re-rotate your thoracic spine.

Assume an “on all fours” position, hands under the shoulders and knees under the hips. Place the left hand behind the head. Keep the right shoulder blade down your back and away from the neck. Do not let the head fall forward. Turn the torso to the left and lift the left elbow toward the ceiling. Push the right hand down into the ground and tighten the right shoulder blade against the rib cage. Hold the open position for two counts and then lower back down. You should be able to turn fifty-five degrees in each direction. If you find one side is more limited—it is often the painful shoulder side—perform more repetitions to that direction. Start with four sets of five each direction.



HALF KNEELING ROTATION ROW



The best fitness activities make human movement more graceful and effortless. This exercise reboots the neural control of scapulo-thoracic coordination and mobility.

The half kneeling position insures that you are holding and tight and tall posture. While this exercise can be performed with a cable unit, I have found resistance tubing to produce a more user-friendly force curve.

Assume a half kneeling position with the right knee down. An Airex pad under the knee can increase comfort. The right hand holds the resistance tubing set at head level in the half kneeling position. The right arm is fully extended and the right side of the body is rotated toward the tubing. Pull the tubing in a

rowing motion and simultaneously rotate the torso to the right. Keep the neck relaxed and eyes straight ahead. Return to the starting position and repeat. Perform all repetitions on the right side and then switch legs and repeat on the left. Perform two sets of ten repetitions on each side.

HALF KNEELING TUBING PRESS



Poor scapula coordination is frequently caused by a lack of rib cage stability. Left side rib cage stability is connected to the opposite side hip through an interwoven series of muscle and fascia known as your core. Training activities that improve this hip-torso connection will give your scapula a more stable platform to create shoulder movement. The half kneeling tubing press will create the neural feedback you need for better shoulder girdle stability.

You will need some resistance tubing set at chest level while in the half kneeling position. Assume a half kneeling position with the tubing attachment directly behind your body. Place the right knee down on an Airex pad and the left foot directly in front of the left hip. Both knees should be bent to 90 degrees flexion. The tubing handle is in your right hand. Grip the floor with the toes of the right foot and the entire left foot. Contract the gluteal muscles and brace the abdominal muscles. Keep a tall and tight torso as you press the tubing forward with the right hand. The head should stay still as you press and rotate to the left at the same time. Hold for two counts at the end of the press and then return to the starting position. Switch leg position and perform the exercise on the left side. Repeat for two sets of ten repetitions.

Michael S. O'Hara, PT, OCS, CSCS

Watch Mike demonstrate the exercises in this article on the Fenton Fitness youtube channel:



https://youtu.be/n_XrFl_62ro

https://youtu.be/n_XrFl_62ro

Fall Programs at Fenton Fitness

Fall is just about here, the kids are back in school, and it's a great time to get back to your fitness program. This fall, we are offering three different programs—something for everyone.



Senior Strong—our safe, fun functional training program for seniors 60+ is back. It's great for those wanting to improve their strength, balance, movement and confidence. Classes begin Sept. 9.

Adult Performance and Physique Enhancement Program—This unique program includes instruction in movement training, injury reduction and rehabilitation, foot speed and agility, explosive power development, proper functional strength training and energy system conditioning, and physique enhancement. Clients are closely supervised as a trainer takes them through an appropriately scaled 60-minute workout with attention always being paid to proper technique, safety, and results. Choose from two or three sessions a week for 15 weeks. Sessions begin Sept. 8.

Sports Performance Training—Athletes wanting to improve their performance in a given sport are invited to participate in our sports performance training sessions. The sessions build on a solid athletic foundation while staying focused on each athlete's individual goals. Choose from one or two sessions per week. Sessions begin Sept. 8.

For more information on any of our programs, see the front desk or contact Jeff Tirrell: jeff@fentonfitness.com.

Environmental Kryptonite



“Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap buildings in a single bound. It’s a bird! It’s a plane! It’s Superman!” Superman rocketed to Earth as an infant when the distant planet of Krypton exploded.

Disguised as Clark Kent, a mild mannered reporter for the Daily Planet, he fought a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and freedom with super powers far beyond those of ordinary mortals. On earth, the environment was ripe for Superman to be the superhero many of us grew up to love and admire. However, introduce him to a room full of glowing green rock and he becomes a crippled, mediocre man at best.

When it comes to improving our health and fitness through diet and exercise, people often have the mindset that they just need to try harder. When they fail, it’s due to the fact that they didn’t work hard enough or put enough effort in. What most people fail to realize is that their environment is acting as their kryptonite. Anyone who has known someone who has overcome an addiction can attest to this. Alcoholics quickly learn that going to the bar, stopping by a gas station that sells cold beer, or hanging out with old drinking buddies is a quick trip off the wagon. While poor eating isn’t necessarily an addiction (though in many cases it is), our environment plays a major role in how successful we are with making positive improvements.

If your pantry is packed with Little Debbie’s and your freezer full of pints of Ben and Jerry’s, relying on sheer willpower is not the best battle strategy. Remember, even the Man of Steel fails miserably when those little chunks of glowing green space rock are around. Environment goes beyond just what is found in your home, office, car, etc. when it comes to food. If the social things you do and friends you hang out with revolve around eating

extra cheese, five meat, deep dish pizza, all you can eat buffets, and copious amounts of alcohol, then those friendships may also be crippling you. If every time you time you sit down to watch TV, you find yourself mindlessly snacking on food when you aren’t hungry, then it might be the TV or room you sit in that’s the problem. This becomes extra difficult when you live with other individuals who don’t share your zeal for health and fitness. Precision Nutrition Founder John Berardi puts it bluntly by saying that if it’s in your house, you or someone you know and love is going to eat it.

The same goes for being active and exercising. The people who are most apt to regularly workout are those who have a fitness facility within 5-10 minutes of their work or home. Studies on various city populations have shown that areas that have more public parks, walking/hiking/biking trails, etc. have healthier and more fit populations. Conversely, those that don’t have access to healthy, affordably priced foods or low cost activity options tend to be more overweight.

The concept of environmental impact is very simple, but not always easy. For some people, it may take several serious conversations with family members, friends, and co-workers. to get them to understand your goals and the impact your environment has on that. In some cases, that might mean needing to find a new group of health minded friends. This is where a gym, cooking classes, running group, etc. can be a great place to help you make new acquaintances. In the case of a non-supportive spouse, some serious ground rules may need to be worked out about what foods can be allowed into the house and where they need to be kept. Understand that not everyone will be understanding, so be patient and empathetic, but persistent.

Interested in learning more about how to make your environment work better for you? Check out our [Precision Nutrition Pro Coach program](#) led by Program Director Jeff Tirrell. Send an email to jeff@fentonfitness.com or text (810)618-0464 for more info.

Jeff Tirrell, CSCS, CFSC, Pn1