Scapular Retraction Exercises: Essential for Shoulder Health and Stability

Shoulder Dislocates

Whoever named this exercise did a great job of scaring people. Of course, it doesn’t dislocate your shoulder.

Shoulder Dislocates are a great mobility drill to move your scapulae through their full range of motion and are an excellent warm-up exercise.

Instructions:

- Grab an elastic band (preferred), broomstick, or towel with both hands and hold it in front of you.
- Keeping your arms straightened, move the object up overhead and behind your back (without letting go or switching the grip) until it touches your butt.
- Adjust the width of your grip so that you can perform the movement with straightened arms and make sure not to deviate to either side.
- In the same way, move the band back overhead and bring it in front of you.
- During the exercise, squeeze your glutes to lock your hips in a stable position and try to maintain a neutral spine, not arching your back.
Barbell Row

The Barbell Row is a compound lift targeting the major movers in your back. It engages your lats, rhomboids, and traps, which are key to improving your pulling strength and scapular retraction.

Instructions:

- Hold a loaded barbell in front of you with your hands a little wider than shoulder-width.
- Bend your knees slightly and lean forward until you feel a slight stretch in your hamstrings or your upper body is parallel to the ground while maintaining a neutral spine (don’t round or arch your back).
- With your legs maintaining a bent position, pull the weight towards you until you make contact with your belly (in the area between your belly button and below your chest, depending on your angle towards the ground).
- Perform the movement in a controlled way without gaining momentum by using your legs or shrugging your shoulders.
- When you make contact with your belly, make sure to pull your shoulder blades together and down.
- Hold a second at the top.
- Descent the bar slowly and controlled until your arms are fully straightened.
Reverse Fly
The Reverse Fly not only works the muscles involved in scapular retraction but also strengthens your posterior deltoids, further enhancing shoulder stability.

Instructions:

- Grab two light weights (dumbbells or plates).
- Bend your knees slightly and lean forward so your upper body is almost parallel to the floor while maintaining a neutral spine.
- Your arms are hanging towards the floor, your palms are facing each other.
- Bend your elbows slightly and maintain that bend during the whole exercise.
- Lift your arms up beside your body, while not changing the bend in your elbows.
- Do not gain momentum by swinging the weights, shrugging your shoulders, moving your upper body, or bending your arms more.
- Slowly descent the weights towards the starting position in a controlled fashion.
Face Pull

Face Pulls are another effective scapular retraction exercise to train the back of your shoulders and improve posture.

Instructions:

- Use a resistance band or cable machine with a rope attachment that you can grip on each side (a longer one is preferred) and set it up in front of you at shoulder height.
- Using both hands, grip each side of the band or rope so that your thumbs are pointing toward you.
- Make sure to have a stable stance with your feet at shoulder-width and your knees slightly bent.
- Pull the band or rope towards and behind your face (at eye or nose level).
- Go behind your face by going around it to the sides of your face.
- At the end of the movement, your hands should be above your elbows.
- Go back as far as possible (the length of the rope attachment might be the limiting factor on the cable machine as you make contact with your face).
- Briefly hold for 1 or 2 seconds.
- Go back to the starting position in a controlled way.
External Rotation Press

The External Rotation Press is an excellent strength and stability exercise for your shoulder girdle. Challenge your ability to keep your shoulder blade retracted and stable while bolstering your rotator cuff muscles and working on your overhead range of motion.

Instructions:

- Use a light resistance band or cable machine with light weight.
- Get down on one knee, with the leg opposite of the side you’re training, propped up.
- The resistance band or cable machine should now be set up at shoulder height.
- Squeeze your glutes, maintain a neutral spine and keep your shoulder blades back and down during the exercise.

- **Position 1:** Pull the band/cable towards you so that your upper arm is on the side of your body, forming a 90° angle and your forearm faces forward, forming also a 90° angle to your upper arm.
  - Briefly hold for 1 or 2 seconds.

- **Position 2:** Rotate your shoulder externally, so that your upper arm stays in the same position parallel to the ground and your forearm now faces towards the sky (again forming 90° angles).
  - Briefly hold for 1 or 2 seconds.

- **Position 3:** Push up, straightening your arm towards the sky without arching your back or shrugging your shoulders.
  - Briefly hold for 1 or 2 seconds.
  - Work your way back to position 2 and hold; position 1 and hold; extend your arm in front and hold.
  - Do all the movements slowly and controlled, pay attention to the angles of your arm position and maintain a neutral spine with your shoulder blades back and down.
Scapular Protraction

Scapular Protraction is the act of moving your shoulder blade forward. Although it may seem counterintuitive to train the opposite movement, it is important to have strong and healthy shoulder blades in every position.

By practicing scapular protraction, you increase the ability of your neglected serratus anterior muscles to stabilize your shoulder blades through their full range of motion.

At the same time, you build a stronger mind-muscle connection with the muscles involved in scapular protraction and retraction.

Instructions:

- Use a cable machine or resistance band and set it up at chest height
- Grab the cable or resistance band and turn away from it so that it is anchored behind your shoulder blade
- Put your foot on the empty handed side one step in front so you have a stable stance
- You are turned directly away from the direction of resistance
- Raise your arm up to chest height and extend your elbow
- Bring your shoulder blade back and down
- With your arm almost fully extended, push it as far forward as possible without shifting your hips by pushing your shoulder forward (bringing your shoulder blade through its full range of motion)
- Slowly retract your arm again to bring your shoulder blade back and down (your elbow stays almost fully extended)
Integrating Scapular Exercises into Your Workout Routine

Effective scapular exercises enhance your total upper body strength, shoulder health, and posture. By integrating them into your routine, you’ll improve stability and potentially prevent injuries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Repetitions / Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder Dislocates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60 Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbell Row</td>
<td>3 – 4</td>
<td>8 – 12 Reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverse Fly</td>
<td>2 – 3</td>
<td>8 – 12 Reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face Pull</td>
<td>2 – 3</td>
<td>8 – 12 Reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Rotation Press</td>
<td>1 – 2</td>
<td>12 – 16 Reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scapular Protraction</td>
<td>1 – 2</td>
<td>12 – 16 Reps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By doing this routine once or twice per week, you will master scapular retraction and improve overall shoulder health and stability.

Keep challenging your body by progressively increasing weight and volume over time.

Most workout plans neglect not only muscles responsible for shoulder stability, but also others involved in upper and lower body posture, such as your core, hamstrings, and glutes.

If you not only struggle with the retraction of your shoulder blades but overall posture, our premium training plan will help you achieve strength, stability, and alignment of your whole body. Our promise is: **Improve your posture in 90 days or get your money back!**


www.posture-labs.com