

Peggy Hall's

Paddling



Power

Stretch and strengthen your shoulders with these surf-specific moves so you can get into waves faster!

Shoulder Sense

It's a rare surfer among us who has not experienced shoulder pain at one time or another. Whether it's soreness from an extended surf session, a popping or clicking sound, weakness, stiffness, or sharp twinges in the joint, shoulder pain should never be ignored as it may lead to more serious problems down the line.

As one who has suffered – and recovered – from chronic shoulder tendonitis, I'm happy to report that there are many ways to keep the shoulders healthy, strong, and flexible. Read on to learn how to strengthen, stretch, and support your shoulders so you can surf year-round, pain-free.

Types and Causes of Shoulder Pain

Shoulder pain can be caused by trauma (like a bad wipeout), repetitive motion (such as paddling), muscular imbalances (such as weak rotator cuff muscles), and even arthritis. According to physical therapist David Ishii of Coast Therapy in Laguna Beach, California, "Shoulder problems are very common in women, who often lack sufficient upper body strength." Ishii, who treats many pro athletes including surfer Prue Jeffries, says, "Surfers can improve their paddling power and keep their shoulders healthy with targeted moves to strengthen and balance the muscles of the upper body and the core muscles of the abs and back."

Ishii explains that while repetitive movements such as paddling can result

in shoulder impingement (where the humerus, or arm bone, is unable to move properly within the scapula, or shoulder blade) some surfers are more susceptible than others. Poor posture evidenced by rounded shoulders or a hunched back, weak core muscles of the abs and back, or underdeveloped rotator cuff muscles all contribute to shoulder instability. Thus, it's essential to strengthen and correct any muscular imbalances so the shoulders and surrounding muscles, tendons, and ligaments can function properly. (For detailed anatomical information about the shoulder, check out www.jointhehealing.com.)

In my case, years of competitive swimming along with extended surf sessions caused an inward rotation of my shoulders, resulting in poor posture and

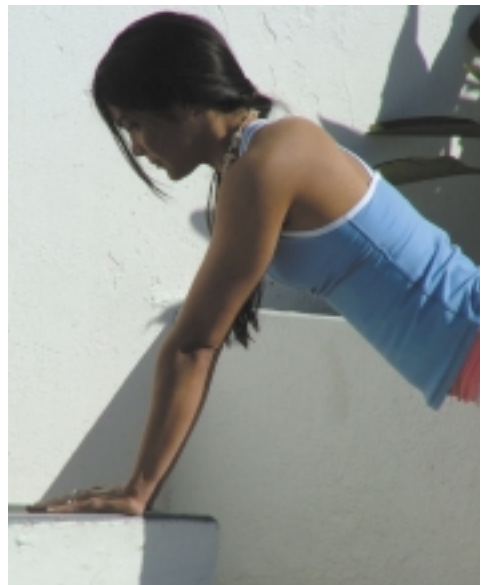
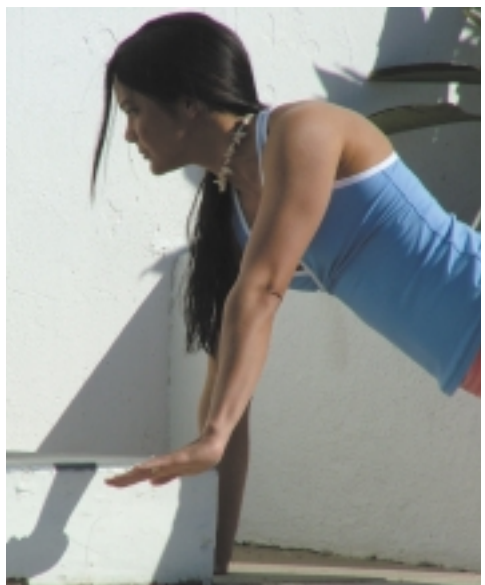
weakened back muscles. I couldn't lift my arm to comb my hair, let alone surf! Sharp pain radiated down my arm and would only abate with the use of ice packs and copious amounts of Motrin. Determined to outwit the chronic pain, I made myself push through it until I collapsed, often in tears. That's an example of the wrong way to treat shoulder pain.

I ultimately agreed to follow the advice of my physical therapist and allowed the shoulder to rest. Amazingly, in a matter of days the pain began to lessen. I also incorporated the following moves, along with yoga, to strengthen and stretch the muscles of the shoulder while promoting healing and recovery.

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Plank Pushups: Place your hands under your shoulders and spread the fingers wide. Extend the legs behind you in “plank” position. Engage the abs, soften the elbows slightly and keep the head and neck in line with the shoulders. Inhale and slowly lower, coming down just halfway, keeping the elbows hugged into the waistline and the upper arms touching the torso. Exhale and press back up into plank position. Do as many as you can, working up to 12-15 at a time. This can also be done with the knees on the floor. Be sure to resist gravity and lower with control in one piece.



Shoulder Strengtheners

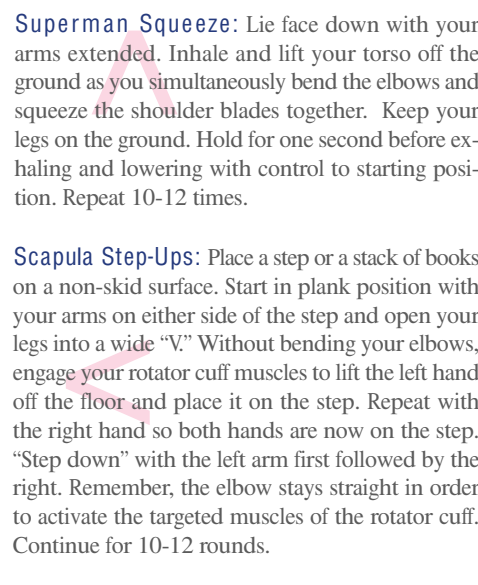
The following moves are best to do every other day, preferably on non-surfing days.

(Demonstrated on this page.)

Shoulder Stretches

Try to stretch your shoulders every day, especially after doing the strengthening exercises above and certainly after every surf session. It’s best to stretch muscles when they’re warm, so be sure to get your blood circulating first, even if just from a hot shower!

(Demonstrated on opposite page.)



Superman Squeeze: Lie face down with your arms extended. Inhale and lift your torso off the ground as you simultaneously bend the elbows and squeeze the shoulder blades together. Keep your legs on the ground. Hold for one second before exhaling and lowering with control to starting position. Repeat 10-12 times.

Scapula Step-Ups: Place a step or a stack of books on a non-skid surface. Start in plank position with your arms on either side of the step and open your legs into a wide “V.” Without bending your elbows, engage your rotator cuff muscles to lift the left hand off the floor and place it on the step. Repeat with the right hand so both hands are now on the step. “Step down” with the left arm first followed by the right. Remember, the elbow stays straight in order to activate the targeted muscles of the rotator cuff. Continue for 10-12 rounds.



Wall Stretch: Stand in a doorway with your elbows bent and palms at about shoulder level on each wall. Carefully lean your body forward to increase the stretch across the pectoral muscles of the chest and the front of the deltoid muscles of the shoulder. Breathe deeply and maintain the stretch for about 30 seconds, working up to one minute.



Shoulder opener with leash: Hold a surf leash or strap straight out from the shoulders with just enough tension to move it up overhead and behind you at shoulder level. Inhale as you stretch the leash behind you and exhale as you draw it forward. Repeat several times, moving slowly and with awareness. Linger over any part of the stretch where you feel the shoulders need extra attention.



Chest Expansion: Stand with your feet about hip-width apart. Clasp your hands behind you, interlacing the fingers. Inhale and expand the chest, exhale and drop the shoulders away from the ears. Keep moving your hands away from your hips and down toward the floor. Hold for about 5-8 breaths, then release and repeat, interlacing the fingers the other way to balance the body. You can also do this in a seated position on your surfboard between sets.

Exercises demonstrated by Tosca Sleight
Photographed by David Hall
Clothing provided by Lululemon

★ Shoulder Support

Do carry your surfboard under the other arm from time to time.

Don't carry your purse or bag over the shoulder.

Do use a backpack over both shoulders or carry your purse or bag in your hand.

Don't slouch or slump forward, especially when sitting on your surfboard between sets.

Do stand, sit and walk with your shoulders over your hips. Imagine your shoulder blades sliding down into your back pockets.

Don't sleep on your shoulder or with your arm overhead.

Do sleep on your back with a pillow under your knees.

Don't eat foods that increase inflammation, pain and stiffness.

Do eat natural, whole foods that support the rebuilding of healthy tissue.

Don't surf through pain.

Do rest your shoulders when necessary, applying ice or heat to accelerate recovery.

Don't constantly complain and feed the pain with negative energy.

Do visualize your shoulders as strong, healthy and flexible.

| Common Problems | Symptoms | Treatment |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Shoulder Impingement | Clicking, popping, pain on top or side of shoulder | Rest, ice, strengthen and stretch |
| Frozen Shoulder | Stiffness, especially with overhead movement | Stretching, movement |
| Tendonitis / Bursitis | Dull ache, limited movement, usually result of impingement | Rest, ice, strengthen and stretch |
| Rotator Cuff Tear | Weakness, pain, can result from impingement | Rest, ice, strengthen and stretch |
| Shoulder Instability | Looseness, weakness | Strengthen, use caution when stretching |
| Arthritis | Pain at front or side of shoulder, grinding | Stretching, movement |