

AC Joint Arthritis Exercises

Understanding AC joint arthritis

The acromioclavicular (AC) joint is located at the top of your shoulder, where the collarbone (clavicle) meets the highest point of your shoulder blade (acromion). Arthritis in this joint can cause pain, swelling, and reduced range of motion.

Symptoms of AC joint arthritis

AC joint arthritis presents several symptoms that can impact daily activities and overall quality of life. Recognizing these symptoms early can help in seeking appropriate treatment and managing the condition effectively.

- **Pain:** Typically felt at the top of the shoulder, especially when lifting the arm overhead or across the body.
 - **Swelling:** Visible swelling around the AC joint.
 - **Limited range of motion:** Difficulty moving the shoulder, especially during activities that involve lifting or reaching.
 - **Weakness:** Feeling of weakness in the shoulder, which can affect daily activities.
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Causes of AC joint arthritis

Understanding the causes of AC joint arthritis can help in preventing and managing the condition more effectively. Here are some common causes:

- **Age:** Natural wear and tear over time.
 - **Injuries:** Previous injuries, such as shoulder separations or fractures.
 - **Overuse:** Repetitive motions that put stress on the AC joint.
 - **Genetics:** Family history of arthritis.
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Recommended exercises

Regular exercise can help alleviate symptoms and improve function. Here are some effective exercises for AC joint arthritis:

Pendulum

1. To stretch your outer shoulder and rotator cuff, stand beside a table or counter.
2. Lean forward, placing one hand on the surface for support, while allowing your other arm to hang freely at your side.

3. Gently swing your free arm forward and backward 10 times, then side to side 10 times, and finally, in a circular motion 10 times.
4. Switch to the other arm and repeat the same steps.
5. After completing both arms, repeat the entire sequence once more.

Crossover arm stretch

1. To stretch the back of your shoulder, stand upright with relaxed shoulders.
2. Slowly pull one arm across your chest, holding it at the upper arm, until you feel a comfortable stretch.
3. Maintain this position for 30 seconds, then relax for 30 seconds.
4. Repeat the process with the other arm.
5. Complete this sequence three more times.

Passive internal rotation

1. To stretch the front of your shoulder, use a lightweight stick such as a yardstick, wooden dowel, or cane.
2. Hold the stick behind your back with one hand and gently grasp the other end with your opposite hand.
3. Pull the stick horizontally until you feel a stretch in the front of your shoulder, ensuring there is no pain.
4. Maintain the stretch for 30 seconds, then relax for 30 seconds.
5. Switch sides and repeat the process.
6. Perform this sequence three more times for optimal results.

Passive external rotation

1. To stretch the back of your shoulder, get a lightweight stick like a yardstick, wooden dowel, or cane.
2. Grasp the stick with one hand and cup the other end with your other hand, keeping it horizontal in front of you.
3. Keep the elbow of the shoulder you are stretching against the side of your body and push the stick horizontally until you feel a pull at the back of your shoulder without pain.
4. Hold for 30 seconds, then relax for 30 seconds.
5. Repeat on the other side and repeat the sequence three more times.

Wall crawl

1. Stand an arm's length away from a wall, ensuring your fingers can just reach it.
2. With your affected arm, gently walk your fingers up the wall as high as you can comfortably manage, keeping your shoulder down and avoiding any shrugging towards your ear.
3. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds before slowly crawling back down.
4. Repeat this exercise one or two more times, aiming to reach higher with each attempt.

Wall push up

1. Stand facing a wall with your arms extended and hands flat against it.
 2. Position your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and engage your core muscles.
 3. With your feet flat on the floor, bend your elbows and open your chest toward the wall, lowering your upper body in a slow, controlled manner until your shoulder blades gently come together.
 4. Hold this position for one second, then slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight.
 5. Repeat this exercise 8 times, gradually increasing the number of repetitions as you progress.
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Tips for managing AC joint arthritis

Managing AC joint arthritis involves adopting a multi-faceted approach that includes lifestyle modifications and medical interventions. Here are some practical tips to help you manage this condition effectively:

- **Stay active:** Engage in regular physical activity to maintain joint function and mobility.
 - **Heat and cold therapy:** Use heat to relax muscles and cold to reduce inflammation and pain.
 - **Maintain a healthy weight:** Extra weight can put more strain on your joints, so maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce symptoms.
 - **Medications:** Over-the-counter pain relievers, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, can help manage pain and inflammation.
 - **Rest and modification:** Avoid activities that exacerbate symptoms and modify exercises to reduce strain on the AC joint.
 - **Physical therapy:** Working with a physical therapist can help you develop a personalized exercise plan and learn techniques to manage pain.
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When to see a doctor

If you experience severe pain, swelling, or a significant reduction in mobility, it is important to consult a healthcare professional. Early intervention can help manage symptoms and prevent further damage.