



SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENT'S SECTION

## Warm-up and training exercises for the overhead athlete<sup>☆</sup>

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Overhead athletes often suffer shoulder and elbow injuries. More often than not these arise insidiously without any obvious trauma. The usual culprit is cumulative overload or repetitive strain. Weight lifting exercises (e.g. lateral deltoid raise, military press, dips, regular or incline barbell press), throwing overhead (e.g. baseball, football), or hitting overhead (tennis serve or overhead, volleyball serve or spike) are typical activities that lead to fatigue and can eventually cause pain. It is important to train for overhead activities so as to minimize the risk of injury.

Simple, daily or warm-up exercises can become part of a routine to maximize function and prevent injury. They will improve flexibility as well as build strength and endurance. Warm-up exercises for the shoulder girdle can be performed with simple low-tech equipment such as a light or medium resistance exercise band. Two such exercises are demonstrated here.

### Shoulder external rotation

- Loop an exercise band around a sturdy object (e.g. a fence) or have a partner hold it at shoulder height
- Grasp tubing handles in each hand (alternatively you can loop the band around your wrist and hand)

- Raise arms out to your side and bend your elbows so that your hands are facing forward (see [Figure 1a](#))
- *Note:* avoid shrugging the shoulders up towards your ears (see [Figure 1b](#))
- Move your shoulder blades back together and simultaneously down your back towards your waist
- Hold this shoulder blade position throughout the exercise
- Rotate your forearms back until your hands are overhead (see [Figure 1c](#))
- Repeat the exercise by slowly moving your forearms forward and back
- Repeat 10–20 times pre-workout
- May also be repeated once or twice daily

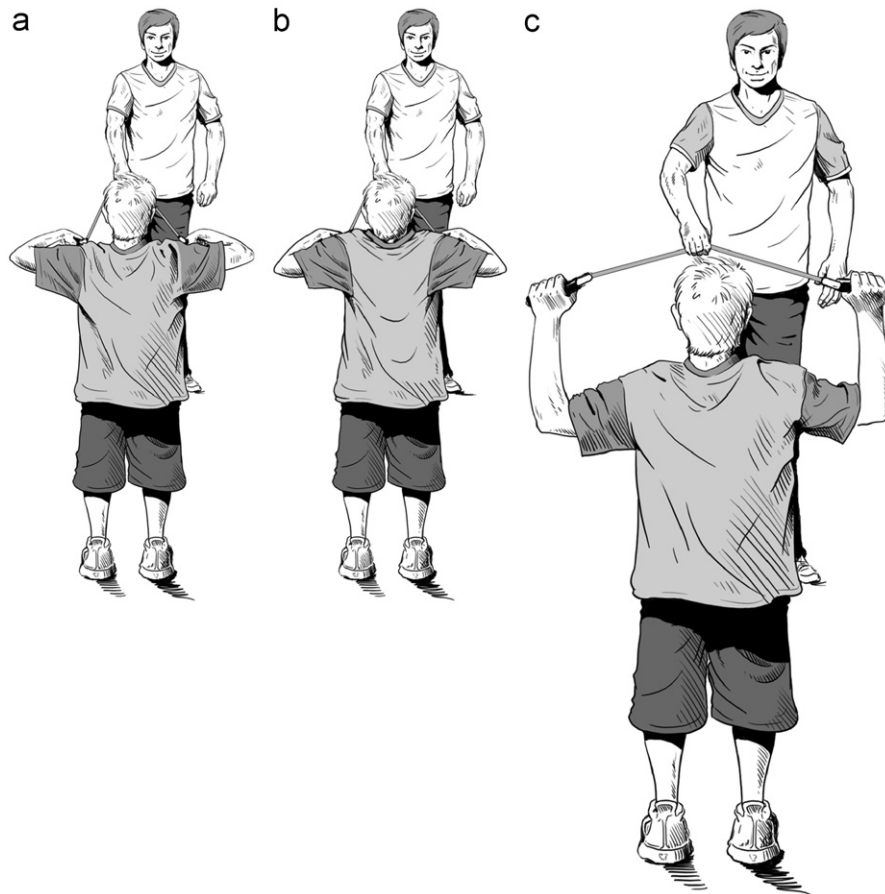
### Lunge with multi-planar shoulder blade squeeze

- Loop an exercise band around a sturdy object (e.g. a fence) or have a partner hold it at shoulder height
- Grasp tubing handles in each hand (alternatively you can loop the band around your wrist and hand)
- Get into a lunge position with left leg forward (if right handed person)
- Raise arms out to your sides with elbows straight
- Squeeze your shoulder blades back together and simultaneously down your back towards your waist
- Move your arms back and forth while keep your hands up and your elbows straight (see [Figure 2a](#))
- Repeat 8–10 times
- The exercise should also be performed with one hand higher than the other (see [Figures 2b and c](#))
- May be repeated once or twice daily and performed pre-workout

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**Figure 1** Shoulder external rotation: (a) start position, (b) faulty start position with excessive shoulder shrug, and (c) finish position.

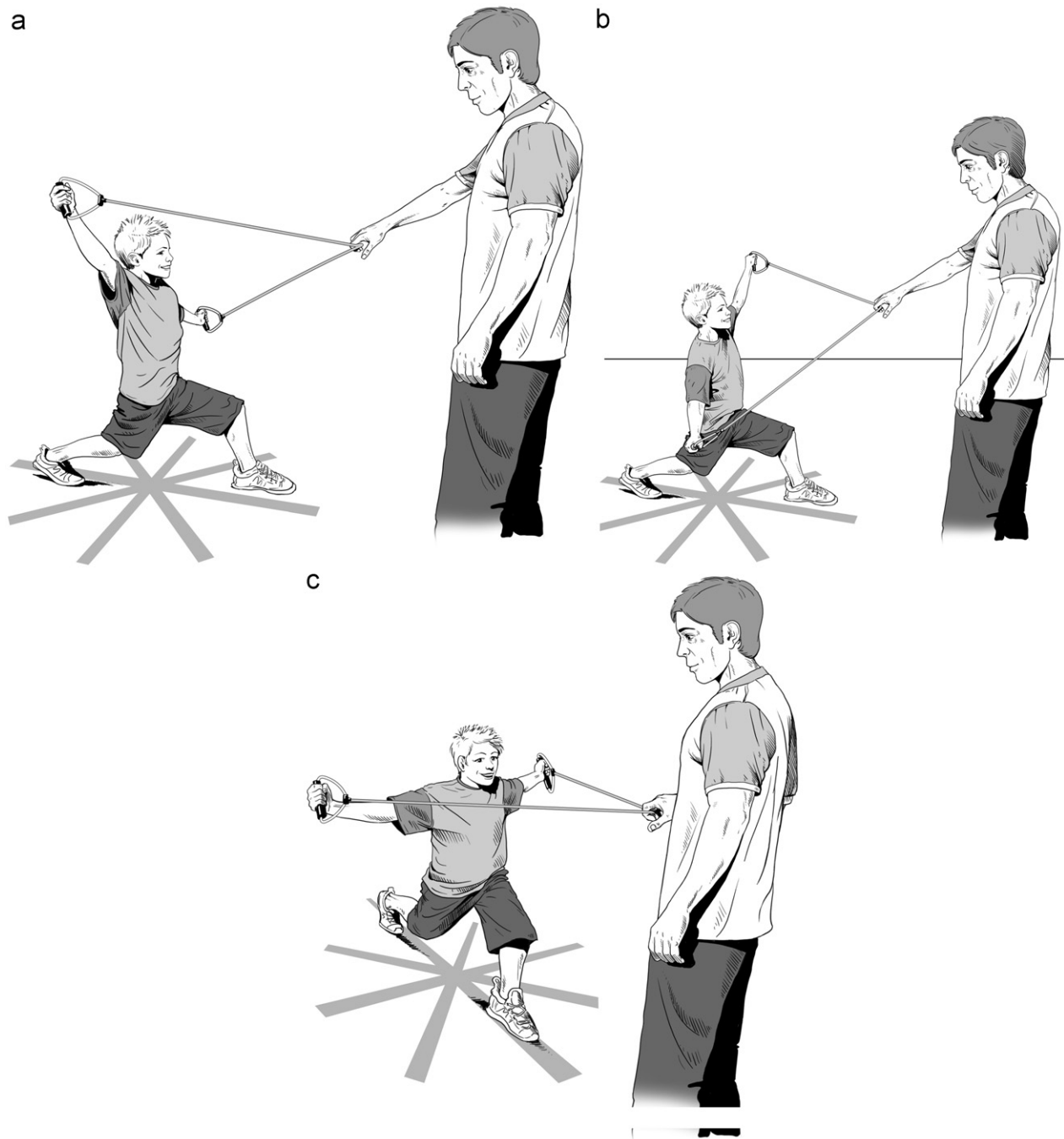


Figure 2 Lunge with multi-planar shoulder blade squeeze.