

Most likely, you have been lifting the same way you were taught in high school ... the standard of 3 sets of 8-12 repetitions, using a fairly heavy weight (70%-85% of your maximal effort), and you do this three to four times a week. Bench press, military press, and lateral raises are among the common exercises most people include in their upper body weight training program. Unfortunately, all of these exercises may do more harm than good in patients who have a history of a shoulder injury. As people age, and specifically after suffering a shoulder injury, we must change our thinking and approach to weight training. Our mindset should shift from trying to build muscle mass, to one of toning and building endurance in the muscles. The standard weight training program should be modified in order to "preserve" your shoulders and help you to develop strength and endurance safely.

Suggested Modifications:

In general, it is recommended that people with a history of shoulder problems avoid overhead and incline presses. We also suggested that they modify their bench press and lateral raise techniques. Instead of lifting heavy weights of only 8-12 repetitions, try lowering the weight significantly and attempt to lift 30- 40 repetitions. The purpose is to increase endurance and muscle tone and decrease the amount of stress placed on the shoulders. Weight training exercises should be done no more than every other day, or 2-3 times a week (on nonconsecutive days). Remember, all exercises should always be completed in a pain free range of motion.

Ø Bench Press:

The problem with this exercise is that it places a tremendous amount of stress on the shoulder joint (glenohumeral joint) and the acromioclavicular joint of the top of the shoulder (AC joint). People are greater risk for developing arthritis in this joint if they are involved in years of heavy bench pressing.

Modified Bench Press:

By modifying the traditional bench press, you can decrease the amount of stress placed on the shoulder. We suggest you avoid bringing your arms past parallel with the floor. To do this, we suggest rolling a towel up 4-5 inches thick and placing it on your chest during the exercise. This will inhibit you from bringing the bar past parallel.

Ø Military Press and Incline Bench:

The problem with these exercises is that they place a tremendous amount of stress on the shoulder, specifically the acromioclavicular joint at the top of the shoulder (AC joint).

Modified Lateral Raise:

Instead of raising the arm to shoulder level or above, try only raising your arm two thirds of the way up (below the level of the shoulder).

Some common exercises for the upper extremities and back put far less stress on the shoulders and can be performed without modification. Examples are: biceps curls, triceps kickbacks, and seated rows.

Dip and pushups are other exercises that should be avoided or used limitedly due to the stress they place on the shoulder.