

Take Care of Your Arm!

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Throwing a ball is one of the most stressful movements one can force upon the body. That's why incorporating a thorough, smart arm care program can be the difference in playing a full season and riding the pine with an injury. The main objective of any good arm care program is to create stability and strength in the shoulder joint, while then being able to create mobility around that stability. This allows for athletes to throw harder while reducing the risk of injury. With the San Diego Padres, our arm care program is one of the most important strengthening aspects for our players.

The muscles targeted by these strengthening exercises are the SITS, or rotator cuff, muscles in the shoulder: supraspinatus (abduction), infraspinatus (external rotation), teres minor (external rotation), and subscapularis (internal rotation). With how much internal rotation that occurs while throwing during a season, focusing on the external rotation and proper scapular movement is very important. Knowing the movement of each muscle allows us to target the specific muscle and action.

While there are many different implements to achieve these strengthening goals, using dumbbells (DB) is the easiest way to do it by yourself. Staying at five pounds or below is important because anything higher than that will recruit the larger deltoid muscles, neglecting the smaller, internal muscles of the rotator cuff that are needing to be targeted. Proper posture and limb positioning are imperative to utilize the correct musculature during the exercise. The DB exercises can be broken down into two categories: standing and prone (face down on a table).

Standing:

D2 – Hand begins at opposite hip with thumb down, turn thumb up as you raise arm up and across body overhead (essentially like the throwing pattern).

Abduction (T's) – Arms straight, thumb up, raised to side up to shoulder height.

Scaption (Y's) – Arms straight, thumb up, raised at 45 degree angle in front of body to shoulder height.

Prone (arm hangs off the side of the table):

Row – Pull to hip

Extension – Arm straight down to ground, palm facing the floor, pull arm back to hip

Abduction (T's) – Arm straight down to ground, thumb up, lift arm out to side toward ceiling.

External Rotation at 90 degrees of Shoulder Abduction (W's) – Hold arm with elbow bent at 90 degrees, turn thumb up, rotate thumb toward ceiling.

The musculature involved in arm care work needs to recover just like any other muscle you train. Performing arm care only on days that you throw longer (120 feet or more) or, for pitchers, whenever they throw off of the mound, whether it be a bullpen or a game outing allows for proper recover between sessions.

Here is a basic strength, conditioning, and arm care example for a starting pitcher on a five day rotation in season:

Monday: Start Day – Arm Care (Standing DB program 2 x 8-10), Light Upper Body Lift

Tuesday: Light Catch, Conditioning = Longer Duration Interval Sprints, Heavy Lower Body Lift

Wednesday: Bullpen. Conditioning = Medium Duration Intervals Sprints. Arm Care (Prone DB Program 2-3 x 12), Heavy Upper Body Lift

Thursday: Catch (90-120 feet), Short Duration Interval Sprints, Light Lower Body Lift

Friday: Catch (Pitcher's preference on distance), Conditioning = Sprints.

Saturday: Start Day

By following a structured arm care program that progresses (increases either weight or repetitions) and deloads (lower volume for a short amount of time for recovery) throughout the season, any overhead throwing athlete is going to set themselves up to be in a much better position than those who neglect proper arm care. It is imperative for a long, healthy career. Take care of your arm!