

Supine 5 Tubing Arm Care

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Continued arm care is pivotal to long-term arm health and improved throwing performance. The last time I checked in I supplied standing and prone dumbbell arm care exercises that can be performed individually by any athlete. This time around, we'll be looking at exercises that require help from a partner or coach.

It is called the Supine 5 Tubing Series. These exercises require more work from the musculature of the scapula. Supine just means that you, the athlete performing the work, will be laying on your back, preferably on a soft top table much like you would find in a physical or massage therapy office or an athletic training room. The implement needed for these exercises include a band or tubing. You can use one with handles and attach a wrist strap, or you can use Jaeger Bands that are made with Velcro straps to place around your wrist. You will also need a bolster (a rolled up towel works great) for a couple of the exercises, plus a baseball to hold throughout the entire process (this creates Ulnar Collateral Ligament (UCL) stability).

As with all arm care exercises, posture and body position are extremely important throughout the entire exercise. As you lay on your back with your head flat on the table, your knees will be bent with your feet flat on the table. This ensures it is easier for you to keep your low back down throughout the entire movement. The reason for this is because your lumbar spine (low back) is designed for stability of your pelvis and spine. On top of lumbar stability, it is imperative that you keep your ribs locked down to avoid thoracic extension (arching your back). Excessive thoracic extension acts as a compensation for movement through the shoulder and scapula when range of **motion** is lacking. We are targeting the muscles of the scapula and shoulders to perform the work, so it only makes sense to labor those muscles, not compensate and let other larger muscles do the work we are seeking.

Your coach or partner will provide consistent resistance throughout the entire range of motion. This means that he or she will start with the band taught and move with the athlete's arm motion to keep it at that same resistance throughout. Only provide enough resistance to create work. The athlete will, no doubt, feel a working or burning sensation, but they should never be visibly struggling to pull the band because it is too heavy. That is an easy way to cause the body to compensate to pull the band, which discussed above, is counterproductive. As for the athlete, the motion and work should be controlled, not just flailing your arm around. Quality work is always desired. The coach should always be providing resistance from the opposite direction of the movement. For example, if the athlete is performing a "T" motion to his/her right, the resistance should be coming from the left.

On to the exercises! All of which should be performed on the throwing arm, but can also be performed on the other for symmetrical purposes.

SUPINE 5 TUBING EXERCISES:

(All done lying on your back on the table with posture as noted above, with tubing strapped around throwing wrist while holding a ball)

1. **D2 Pattern** - 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). Arm stays fully extended (straight) through the entire motion.
2. **T's (Horizontal Abduction)** – Start with arm straight up to the ceiling, thumb to the side so palm is toward your face. Drive your thumb to the right (for a righty thrower, vice versa for a lefty) until it is perpendicular to your body. Control back to starting position. The arm stays straight through entire motion.
3. **I's (Extension)** – Start with arm straight up to the ceiling, palm toward your face. Lower arm down to hip and control back up to starting position. The arm stays straight through entire motion.
4. **External Rotation at ~70-80 degrees of abduction** – *You will need the bolster for this exercise* Shoulder will be abducted to about 70-80 degrees with the bolster under your triceps. Flex (bend) your elbow to 90 degrees. Turn your thumb up toward the ceiling. The motion begins by throwing your thumb backwards, causing external rotation of the shoulder. Control back to the starting position.
5. **External Rotation at 0 degrees of abduction** – *You will need the bolster for this exercise* Shoulder will be abducted at 0-10 degrees (essentially just sitting at your side) with the bolster upright in your armpit. Flex your elbow to 90 degrees and turn your thumb to the outside. The motion begins by throwing your thumb to the right (for a righty thrower, vice versa for a lefty). Control back to the starting position. Keep your elbow flat on the table throughout the motion.
 - a. *Note: person providing resistance will need less for this exercise as it is challenging to perform properly

Perform this series of exercises after your longer throwing days, or days that you throw off of the mound. A good place to start is 1 set of 8 repetitions of each. You can slowly progress to more repetitions, more sets, heavier resistance, or eccentrics after weeks and months. By following a structured arm care program that properly progresses 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!