Conservative Swimmer’s Shoulder Protocol

- **4-6 visits over 6 weeks**
- Treat rotator cuff weakness and impingement symptoms first. Then address instability. Typically it is difficult to treat in-season without rest. During the week only lower body workouts are allowed. The athlete may compete in meets only if asymptomatic.
- Emphasize proximal scapular stabilization while being careful not to overwork an overused rotator cuff.
- Essentially follow the impingement protocol followed by a gradual return to swimming.
- Emphasis is on high repetition, low weight free weight program
- Address scapular mal-positioning if applicable
- Minimal to no pain during or after exercises, although fatigue is OK
- **No passive ROM (PROM) or pulleys unless specifically indicated by the physician**

I. Modalities:

A. Ice following exercises
B. Transfrictional massage for tendonitis (if indicated by physician)
C. No phonophoresis/iontophoresis
D. Ultrasound (if indicated by physician)
E. Soft-tissue techniques (if indicated by physician)

II. Strengthening – all exercises **painfree** ROM only (3x/week max)

A. Isometric exercises
B. Isotonic exercises – strengthening exercises #1-8 as tolerated
   1. Perform with free weights only (**No theraband** - except IR #6)
      a. Repetitions – 20-50 reps before adding/progressing in weight
      b. Start against gravity without weight; progress as tolerated to:
         - 2 oz. (dinner knife)
         - 4 oz. (tuna can)
         - 8 oz. (soup can)
         - 1 lb. weight
         - 2 lbs., 3 lbs., etc.
   2. Goals:
      a. Overhead athlete: 3-5 lbs x 50 reps.
      b. General rehab candidate: 1-3 lbs x 50 reps.
      c. Progress weight as tolerated – **painfree**

C. Scapular stabilization exercises – #1-8 as tolerated
   1. Particular emphasis if scapulothoracic weakness or maltracking present
   2. Emphasize inferior trapezius and serratus anterior - Inhibit excessive superior trapezius
III. Return To Activity:

A. It is best to treat out-of-season, followed by a gradual return to swimming.
B. A gradual return to activity may be implemented once the activities of daily living are painfree or a satisfactory functional capacity has been reached.
C. Maintenance and continuation of isotonic strengthening exercises should be encouraged 1-2x/week for 3-6 months.

This protocol provides you with general guidelines for the conservative rehabilitation of the patient with swimmer’s shoulder. The physician will make specific changes to the program as appropriate for an individual patient.
SHOULDER ISOMETRICS

Hold _____ seconds.

Perform _____ repetitions _____ times per day.

1. **Flexion**
   
   Press hand forward into wall.

2. **Extension**
   
   Press hand backward into wall.

3. **Abduction**
   
   Place towel inside arm.
   Push elbow into wall.
4. Adduction
Place towel inside arm.
Pull arm in toward body.

5. External Rotation
Place towel inside arm.
Press back of hand into wall.

6. Internal Rotation
Place towel inside arm.
Press palm of hand into wall.
SHOULDER STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

General Guidelines

1. Exercises should not be painful.
2. Perform exercises slowly.
3. Maintain the correct position.
4. Warm up prior to using weights – stretching and pendulum exercises as instructed.
5. Ice after exercise for 10-20 minutes.
6. Exercise 4 days a week.

Perform _____ repetitions.

1. **Flexion**

   Start with arm at side, thumb forward. Raise arm to shoulder level (parallel to ground). Lower slowly to starting position.

2. **Abduction**

   Start with arm midway between front and side of your body, thumb pointing up. Raise arm sideways to shoulder level in scapular plane. Lower slowly.

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3. **Abduction**

Start with arm midway between the front and side of your body, thumb down. Raise arm diagonally to 45° level and lower slowly to starting position.

4. **External Rotation**

Lie on uninvolved side. Place a towel roll under elbow. Keep elbow bent at 90° squeeze shoulder blades together. Raise hand away from stomach toward the ceiling. Lower slowly to starting position.

5. **External Rotation**

Keep elbow bent at 90°. Squeeze shoulder blades together. Raise hand up. Lower slowly to starting position.

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6. **Internal Rotation with Theraband**

Place Theraband in door. Squeeze shoulder blades together. Pull hand toward stomach. Slowly return to starting position.

7. **Wall Push-Ups**

Perform standing push-ups against the wall. Progress to a counter top, then to the floor with knees bent and then floor with knees straight.

8. **Biceps Curls**

Raise hand toward shoulder with palm up. Lower slowly to starting position.

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SCAPULAR STABILIZATION

General Guidelines
1. Exercises should not be painful.
2. Perform exercises slowly.
3. Maintain the correct position.
4. Ice after exercise for _____ minutes.
5. Perform _____ times per day for _____ days per week.

1. Scapular Retraction

Pull shoulder blades together and down.

Hold _____ seconds

Perform _____ repetitions.

2. Scapular Depression

Place theraband over door, squeeze shoulder blades together while pulling your arm to your side. Slowly return to starting position.

Perform _____ repetitions.
3. **Extension**

Start with your arm hanging straight down with your thumb pointing down. Raise arm backwards and slowly return to starting position.

**Perform _____ repetitions.**

4. **Horizontal Abduction**

Start with your arm hanging straight down with your thumb pointing out, raise arm out to the side to shoulder level (parallel to ground) and then slowly return to starting position.

**Perform _____ repetitions**

5. **Proprioception (Countertop)**

Place your hands on a countertop. Slowly shift weight from one side to the other while keeping your shoulder blades flat to your back.

**Perform _____ repetitions.**

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6. **Proprioception (Wall)**

Stand facing a wall. Keep your shoulder blades together and down and make circles with a ball in a clockwise direction. Repeat same number of reps in a counterclockwise direction.

**Perform_____ repetitions.**

7. **Proprioception (Ball dribble)**

Stand facing the wall. Keep your shoulder blades together and down and dribble to ball off of the wall. You may advance to dribbling the ball in shapes and patterns.

**Perform_____ repetitions.**

8. **Wall Push-Ups**

Perform standing push-ups against a wall. Progress to countertop, then floor with knees bent and then floor with knees straight.

**Perform_____ repetitions.**
9. **Proprioception (Hands & Knees)**

Get on your hands and knees. Keep your shoulder blades together and down and make circles with the platform in a clockwise direction. Repeat same number of reps in a counterclockwise direction.

**Perform _____ repetitions.**