

# Exercises After Elbow Injury

# Exercises After Elbow Injury

- You can now move your elbow. Your elbow may feel stiff when you start to move it.
- Your arm may have some bruising or swelling. You may also feel some pain or discomfort while you do these exercises. These things are common. They will get better over time.

## **If your arm is very swollen:**

- Lie down with your arm raised up on pillows so that it is higher than your heart for 30 minutes. Do this 2 or 3 times a day.

## **Managing pain**

- Your pain may be worse at night. Try sleeping on your unaffected side with 2 or 3 pillows in front of you. Put your affected arm on the pillows.
- When sitting, try putting 1 or 2 pillows on your lap. Rest your elbow on the pillows.



# Heat and ice

## Heat

- Use heat (like a hot pack or a hot water bottle) for about 15 minutes before you exercise. This will help loosen up your elbow.

### **If you had surgery:**

- › **Your incision (cut) must be fully healed (closed) and not infected before using heat or soaking it in water. If you have any questions about this, ask your surgeon.**

## Ice

- Wrap ice (like a gel pack or a bag of frozen vegetables) in a towel and use it for about 15 minutes after you exercise to help control pain in your elbow, as needed.

## Exercises

- Your physiotherapist will show you:
  - › which exercises to do.
  - › how to do the exercises correctly.
- Move your arm and elbow as far as you can without feeling too much discomfort.
- Hold the stretches for the full amount of time. This lets your muscles stretch fully.

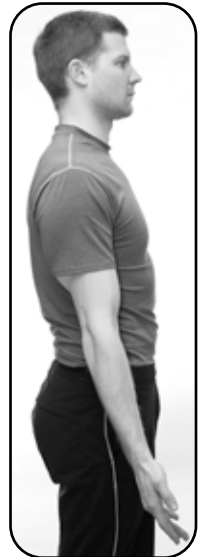
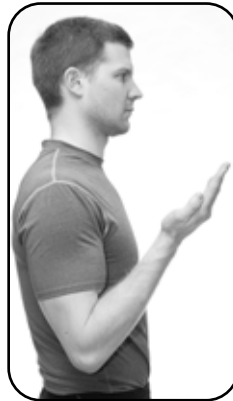
- **Do not** hold your breath while you do the exercises.
- **Only do the exercises your physiotherapist has picked for you.**
- Plan to do your exercises 3 times a day.

## Active or active assisted exercises

### ☐ Exercise 1

#### Bending (flexion) and straightening (extension)

- Sit or stand.
- Slowly bend your affected elbow as far as you can.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Straighten your elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.



## □ Exercise 2

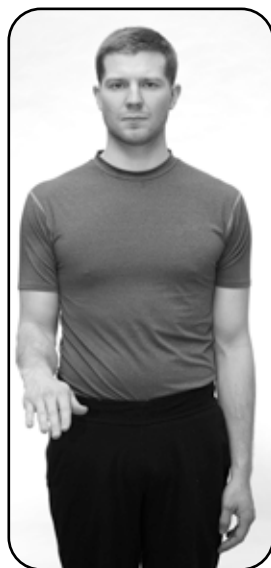
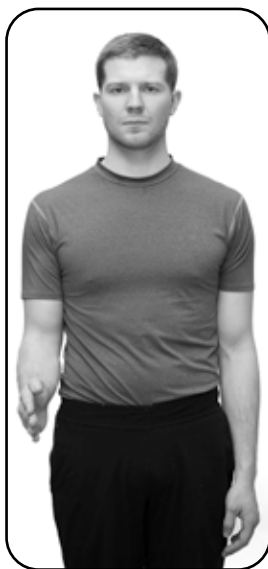
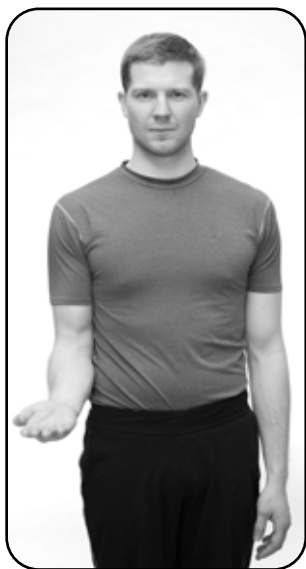
- Lie on your back.
- Start with your affected arm at your side with your palm facing up.
- Slowly bend your affected elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Straighten your elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.
- If your arm is weak, you may use your other hand to help with these movements.



### □ Exercise 3

#### **Palm up (supination) and palm down (pronation)**

- Sit or stand.
- Bend your elbow. Keep it at your side.
- Turn your forearm so that your palm is facing up.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Turn your forearm so that your palm is facing down.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.
- If your arm is weak, you may use your other hand to help with these movements.



## □ Exercise 4

### **Bending your wrist (flexion and extension)**

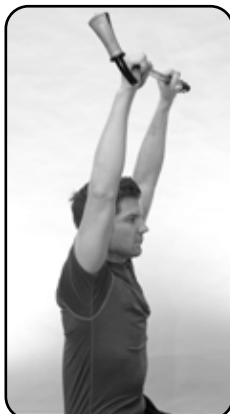
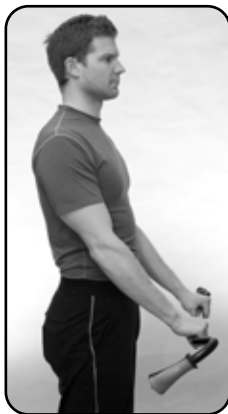
- Sit at a table.
- Put your forearm on the table with your wrist over the table's edge.
- Bend your wrist upwards.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Then, bend your wrist down over the edge of the table.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## □ Exercise 5

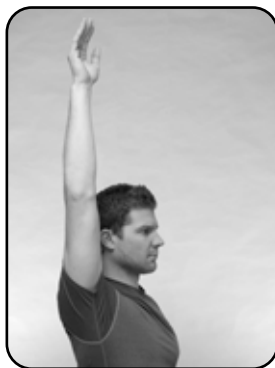
### Raising your arm (shoulder flexion)

- Hold a stick or cane in front of you with both hands.
- Lift both arms forward. Use your unaffected arm to raise your affected arm.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Slowly lower using your arms, using mostly your non-affected arm.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## □ Exercise 6

- Have your arm at your side.
- Raise your arm up in front of you as far as you can.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Bring your arm back to your side.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.



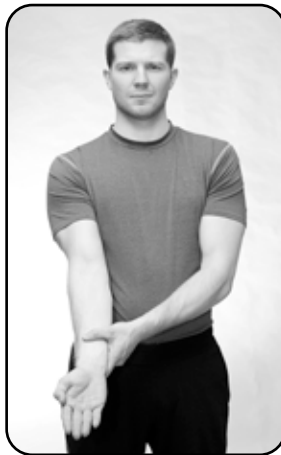


# Stretching exercises

## □ Exercise 7

### **Straightening your elbow (extension)**

- Hold your affected arm with your other hand.
- Slowly straighten your affected elbow with your unaffected hand. You should feel a stretch in your elbow and in the front of your arm.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## ☐ Exercise 8

- Lie on a bed.
- Lie on on your back.
- Place your affected arm over the edge of the bed with your palm facing up. You may place a rolled-up towel under your arm for comfort, if needed.
- Straighten your elbow. Let your affected arm hang. You should feel a stretch in the front of your arm.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



- ☐ **Progression (make harder) 1:** Do the exercise 1 time, holding for up to 5 minutes.
- ☐ **Progression 2:** Do exercise 8 again with a \_\_\_\_\_ pound weight in your hand.

## □ Exercise 9

- Stand close to the corner of a wall or a door frame.
- Place the front of your shoulder and the palm of your hand on the wall, or on the edge of the door frame. Keep your elbow as straight as you can.
- Move so that your elbow is in front of your body.
- Slowly press your body against your elbow so that your elbow straightens.
- Straighten your elbow until you feel a mild to moderate stretch.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## □ Exercise 10

### **Bending your elbow (flexion)**

- Hold your affected arm with your other hand.
- Use your other hand to slowly bend your elbow. You should feel a stretch in your elbow and in the back of your arm.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## □ Exercise 11

- Stand close to a wall.
- Rest the forearm of your affected arm on the wall, so that your hand is above your head.
- Place a towel under your forearm or wear long sleeves so you can slide your arm on the wall.
- Slowly slide your arm down the wall by bending your elbow. Bend your elbow until you feel a mild to moderate stretch.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## □ Exercise 12

### Turning your palm up (supination) and down (pronation)

- Bend your affected elbow. Keep it at your side.
- Use your other hand to turn your forearm so that your palm is facing up.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- Then, turn your forearm so that your palm is facing down.
- Hold for 10 to 30 seconds.
- You should feel a stretch in your forearm and wrist.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



# Strengthening exercises

## □ Exercise 13

### Bending your elbow (flexion)

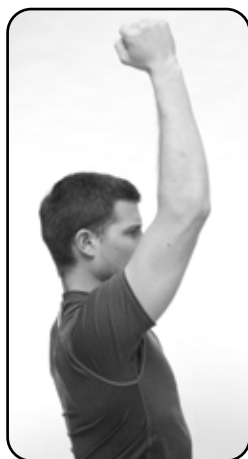
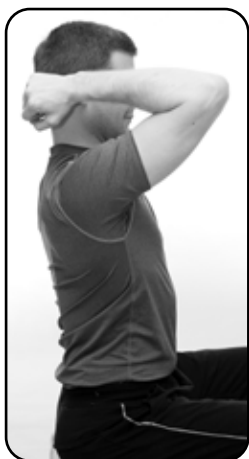
- Hold a \_\_\_\_\_ pound weight and slowly bend your affected elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Straighten your elbow.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times.



## ☐ Exercise 14

### **Straightening your elbow (extension)**

- Sit or stand.
- Raise your affected arm raised over your head with your elbow bent. Hold your affected arm with your other hand, if needed.
- Raise your hand, straightening your elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.



- ☐ **Progression:** Do the exercise above with a \_\_\_\_\_ pound weight in your hand.

## ☐ Exercise 15

- Lie on a bed.
- Lie on your stomach.
- Place the forearm of your affected arm over the edge of the bed.
- Straighten your elbow.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Relax your arm by bending your elbow.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.

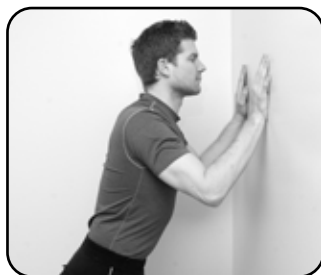
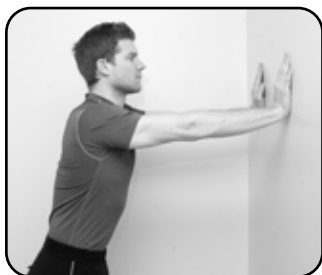


☐ **Progression:** Do the exercise above with a \_\_\_\_\_ pound weight in your hand.



## □ Exercise 16

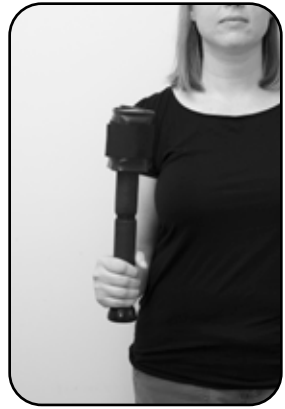
- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Place your hands on a wall shoulder width apart.
- Lean into the wall by letting your elbows bend as much as possible. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Then, slowly push away from the wall by straightening your elbows. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 to 30 times.



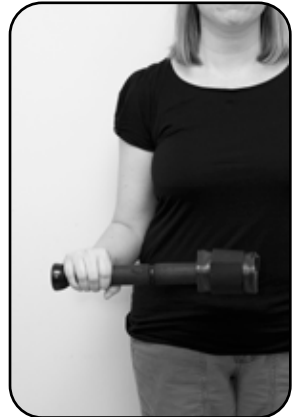
## □ Exercise 17

### Pronation and supination

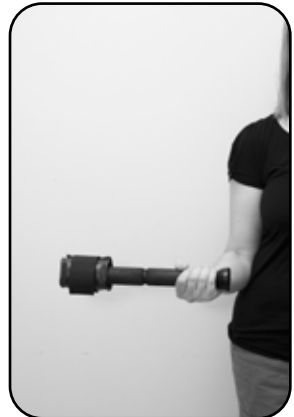
- Bend your elbow and keep it at your side.
- Hold the end of a long object in your hand. Start with the object upright.



- Slowly move the object like a windshield wiper on a car. Stop when your palm is facing down. Keep your elbow tucked at your side.
- Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



- Slowly move the object to the other side and stop when your palm is facing up. Keep your elbow tucked at your side.
- Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



# Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Physiotherapy  
*Designed and Managed by:* Nova Scotia Health Library Services

WB85-1450 © July 2025 Nova Scotia Health Authority  
To be reviewed July 2028 or sooner, if needed.  
Learn more: <https://library.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources>

