

Cross Training Around Upper Body Injuries

Sean Mulvaney, MD and Britta Svensson, DPT, CMTPT

General Concepts: The guiding principles for cross-training around your injury during your recovery include: 1) avoid specific activities that caused you pain before your treatment until you are fully recovered, 2) as you progress, proceed gradually and test each new movement or exercise. Remaining active produces a better healing environment than remaining sedentary. The idea is to stay fit while not impairing the ongoing healing. Start any exercise gradually and at first use them only every other day for the first 2 weeks to see how it effects your injury site. As you get farther along in the healing process you may be able to slowly add exercises that you would not have tolerated initially. (see the rehabilitation sheet for your injury).

1. **Walking:** This is often a safe and reasonable way to stay fit which may be done on a treadmill or outside. If using a treadmill, you will have to ascertain whether or not using the arm rails hurts your injury site. Remain upright while walking and be careful about swinging your injured limb. Start with short distances (about a ¼ of a mile) and see whether this bothers your injury. If it seems ok, gradually add distance in ¼ mile increments and increase your pace.
2. **Pool:** You may flutter kick without using a kick board on your stomach or back with your arms at your sides. Using a floatation belt, do deep-water jogging without using your arms. You may also walk while in a pool.
3. **Elliptical machine:** (without using the arm extensions): Use the hand rails to steady yourself. Gradually increase time and intensity.
4. **Stationary Bike:** It is critical to properly adjust the seat height. An improperly adjusted seat height can exacerbate any lower body injury. Your knee should be almost fully straight at the bottom of the peddle stroke. If using an upright stationary bike, you should have an upright. Do not pedal while standing (up and off of the saddle). If using a **recumbent stationary bike** properly adjust the seat length. Gradually increase time and intensity if your injury site allows.
5. **Resistance Training:** Some suggestions include: body weight squats, lunges, single leg squats and lower body weight machines. Do not include free weights because your upper body injury will be stressed even by holding the bar or dumbbell. Do not include movements with accelerations like box jumps.
6. **Running:** Depending on your initial fitness levels and the location of your injury site this may be possible. This should not be added until you are farther along in your healing process (2 -4 months)