

TRAINING GUIDE

The Shoulder Training Guide

Build strong, healthy shoulders that don't ache from your desk job

Shoulders are one of the most injured joints in adult training, mostly from imbalanced pressing without any rear delt or rotator cuff work. This guide covers how to train them properly and keep them healthy long term.

8 Best Exercises

Weekly
Programming

Progressive
Overload

Do's & Don'ts

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PT · Dad of 2

WHY BALANCED SHOULDER TRAINING MATTERS

The shoulder is the most mobile joint in your body, which also makes it the most prone to injury without proper balance. Most dads press heavily but never train the rear delts, creating an imbalance that eventually causes pain.

VOLUME & FREQUENCY

- **FREQUENCY**

2x per week. Shoulders are already worked hard during chest and back sessions too.

- **WEEKLY SETS**

10-14 direct sets per week across the three deltoid heads.

- **REP RANGE**

8-12 reps for most shoulder work, this joint responds well to moderate rep ranges.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Train all three parts of the shoulder every week: front, side and rear delts, not just pressing. Rear delt neglect is the single most common cause of shoulder pain in men who train regularly.

8 BEST EXERCISES TO BUILD YOUR SHOULDERS

Overhead Press

COMPOUND

3-4 × 6-10

The primary shoulder strength builder.

Dumbbell Shoulder Press

COMPOUND

3 × 8-12

Allows a more natural pressing path and reduces strain on the front delts.

Lateral Raise

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

Targets the side delt directly, the key to broader-looking shoulders.

Cable Lateral Raise

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

Keeps constant tension on the side delt throughout the entire movement.

Face Pull

ISOLATION

3 × 15-20

Essential for rear delt development and overall shoulder joint health.

Rear Delt Flye

ISOLATION

3 × 12-15

Often skipped, but crucial for balanced shoulder development and posture.

Arnold Press

COMPOUND

3 × 8-10

The rotational element hits all three deltoid heads more completely.

Landmine Press

COMPOUND

3 × 8-10 ea.

A joint-friendly pressing option that's easier on cranky shoulders.

HOW TO FIT THIS INTO YOUR WEEK

Pick the structure that matches the days you can realistically commit to, not the one you wish you had.

2-3 Days Available — Full Body

One pressing movement and one rear delt exercise per session. This alone prevents most imbalance issues.

4 Days Available — Upper/Lower

Both upper days include shoulder work. Day 1: heavier pressing. Day 2: lateral raises and rear delt focus.

5-6 Days Available — Push/Pull/Legs

Front and side delts get worked on Push day, rear delts on Pull day. This naturally balances the joint across the week.

SAMPLE FULL BODY SHOULDER SESSION

1. Overhead Press — 3 × 8
2. Lateral Raise — 3 × 12
3. Face Pull — 2 × 15-20 (finisher)

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD — HOW TO GET STRONGER

Doing the same weight for the same reps forever is why most people stop seeing results. Progress needs to be tracked and deliberate. Use these methods, in this order of priority.

1

Add reps first (double progression)

Work within a rep range, e.g. 8-12. Add a rep each week before adding weight, once you hit the top of the range for all sets, increase the load.

2

Add weight

Once reps are maxed out, add a small amount of weight and drop back to the bottom of your rep range. Repeat the cycle.

3

Add sets

Increase total volume gradually across a training block — e.g. 3 sets in week 1, building to 4-5 sets by week 4.

4

Improve technique and range of motion

Better control and a fuller range at the same weight is genuinely harder and drives more progress than people realise.

5

Manipulate tempo

A slower 3-4 second lowering phase increases time under tension without touching the weight on the bar.

EXAMPLE: 4-WEEK OVERHEAD PRESS PROGRESSION

Week	Target
1	3 × 8 @ moderate working weight
2	3 × 9 @ same weight
3	3 × 10 @ same weight
4	Add weight, reset to 3 × 8, repeat cycle

DO

- ✓ Train all three parts of the shoulder: front, side and rear, not just pressing.
- ✓ Warm up thoroughly. Shoulders are more injury-prone cold than almost any other joint.
- ✓ Include face pulls or rear delt work every single week without exception.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't press overhead with poor form just to lift heavier. Shoulder impingement follows quickly.
- ✗ Don't skip rear delt work, this imbalance is behind a huge amount of shoulder pain in adults.
- ✗ Don't ignore shoulder pain during training. This is a joint where pushing through often makes things worse.

WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)