

Shoulder Pain - the swimmer's curse!

Summer is approaching. The Open Water Series, multiple triathlons and the Rott Swim is starting to look serious. You should have some idea of a training plan, volumes, intensities, training locations and who to train with. But what about the commonest injury in swimming - *swimmer's shoulder*. What will you do if your shoulder starts to get sore.

You do have a lot of options, some good and some dodgy. Swim on and ignore it at your own peril. It is definitely best to take advice from someone who knows what they are talking about. But who??

Before giving you some thoughts on who to talk to, it is best to consider avoiding the problem in the first place. The easiest way to do this is to graduate your training volumes and do some pre-swim warm up stretches to try to maximise your flexibility in the areas that count for swimmers. This [website](http://www.rotnestchannelswim.com.au/sites/default/files/The%20Bare%20Essentials2.pdf) (Link <http://www.rotnestchannelswim.com.au/sites/default/files/The%20Bare%20Essentials2.pdf>) gives you a couple of basic stretches aimed at your shoulder and neck.

The internet is full of stretches you can do. Some will be appropriate but many will be unnecessary unless you have specific muscle tightness. You won't really know unless you have a flexibility assessment. Stretching is time consuming. If you feel inflexible, you may be best to see a swimming specialist physio for a flexibility assessment and specific stretch recommendations. Many experienced swimmers know the correct stretches to utilise for their body but this is not the same for everyone.

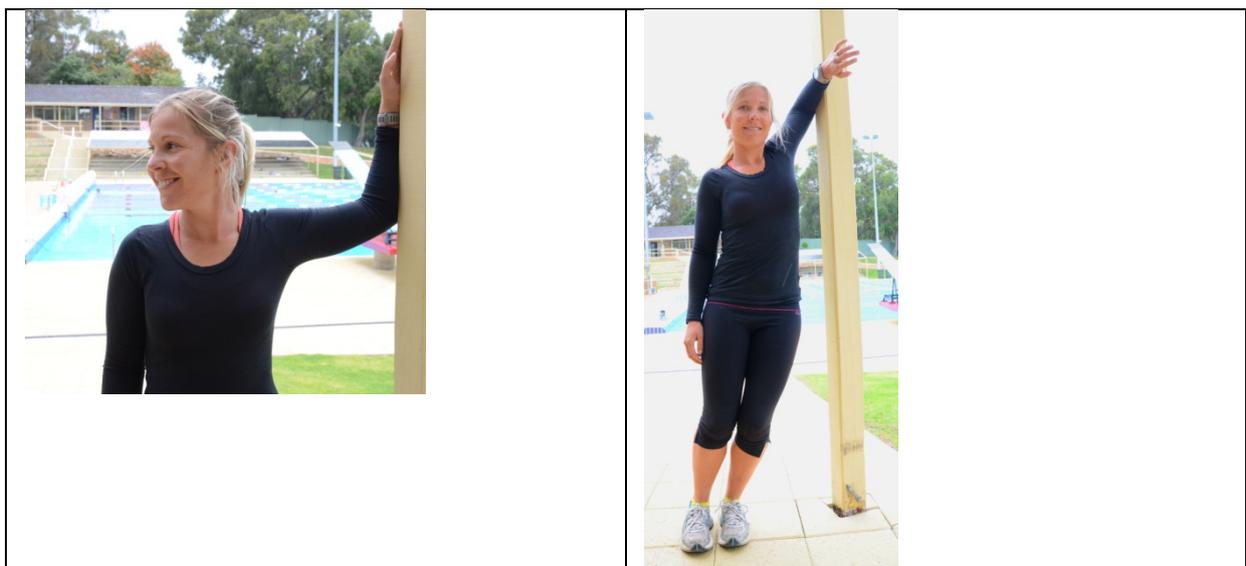
Now, you have left your prevention run too late and you are starting to get symptoms. What do you do? Below I have reproduced a table from an article I did for the Rott Channel Swim website.

Your problem	Your solution	Ask Who?
Over-training/coaching faults Poor stroke technique Unilateral breathing	Modify your swimming style Modify your training – less distance, less often, less sprint	Swim coach Knowledgeable friend Knowledgeable physio Not the internet
Inappropriate gym program	Alter program. Right exercise, right technique, right amount	Knowledgeable physio Knowledgeable gym instructor Knowledgeable swim coach
Poor core (trunk) stability Muscle imbalance Poor posture	Specific personalized exercise program	Knowledgeable physio

Inadequate warm up Inadequate pre-stretch	Increase warm up period Perform appropriate stretches	Knowledgeable physio Knowledgeable swim coach Knowledgeable friend
Specific injury, any pain or uncertain what to do	Get help NOW	Knowledgeable physio Doctor

There are some key points you need to take note of:

- ❑ When it comes to training and technique problems, the internet is NOT the answer. Despite the abundance of information, including swimsmooth.com, nothing beats clear personalised advice from someone with knowledge. Google can't see, can't touch and can't assess your problem.
- ❑ Despite your friend's best intentions, they are usually not experts on shoulder problems. Advice *they* have received does not always apply to *you*. Your problem is your problem. It needs to be looked at at an individual level
- ❑ If you have had previous shoulder problems that have settled by itself and you intend increasing your volume of swimming, get a preventative assessment and advice. It is easier to avoid the problem than try and get rid of it once it is there and you want to keep training.
- ❑ The least you should be doing to avoid or manage Swimmer's Shoulder is basic pre-swim stretches. A sample of the types of stretches you *can* do are shown below. It is best to get advice as to which exercises you should do.





Most Swimmer's Shoulder problems settle with appropriate intervention. However, it is much easier to avoid the problem with stroke correction, sensible training and flexibility assessment and advice, than to deal with it after it occurs. Be sensible but get help if you need it.

Jeremy Nyman

Woodlands Physiotherapy

6 Liege Street
Woodlands 6018

woodlandsphysio.com.au