

Dealing with and Preventing Common Fencing Injuries – by Krieger

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Muscle Sprain

Tendonitis

Rotator Cuff Injuries

STRETCHES

All stretches are to be done to both sides equally, as often as you like. Bruce Lee suggests stretching while watching tv. That's what I do

HANDS

- Straight-arm Pullbacks

Extend the arm, with the wrist facing upwards. Reach underneath with the opposite hand, and pull the fingers towards the body

Isometric Meditation

Place both palms together directly in front of the chest at about bottom of the ribcage, with the entire palm touching on both hands. If both palms will not touch completely, apply gentle even pressure until they do. When the palms do touch, press the wrists downwards towards the ground.

- Reverse Isometric Meditation

As Above, but with the Backs of the hands. Press upwards instead of downwards.

- Back-Hand Push

Put one arm in front of the body with the back of the wrist upwards, and the forearm horizontal place the heel of the other hand just below the knuckles of the first hand, and push the arms together gently. You will feel a stretch along the backs of the wrist and hand.

Straight-arm Pull

Extend one arm, thumb up, elbow locked, with the fingers curled towards the body. Cup the other hand around the first, and pull gently towards the body, putting pressure on the fingers and back of the hand. When done properly, you will feel the stretch to the elbow.

Thumb Stretch

push the thumb of one hand towards it's wrist with the thumb of the other hand. Eventually, you will be able to make them touch (thumb to wrist)

ARMS

- Windmills

Stand with one foot slightly in front of the other. Place one arm up and one down. Windmill the arms vertically on each side of the body in the forwards direction. Continue for a while, then reverse the direction. This should be done gently and slowly at first, then after a few months of use, speed can be increased to strengthen the rotator cuff.

- Door/Wall Stretches

Face a door or wall, place the palm of the hand on the wall or door frame at approx shoulder height. Rotate the body away from the wall/door so that the arm ends up behind the body.

After the shoulder is loosened up after a few weeks, this can be varied from placing the hands down to the waist, to over the head.

- Front Stretches

Place one arm in front of the body, horizontally at shoulder height. With the other arm, reach under behind the elbow, and pull straight back, VERY gently. You are moving the arm contrary to it's strength here, so you must be very gentle. NEVER push this stretch.

TORSO

- Twists

Stand with the feet slightly apart. Twist slowly from side to side

- Side Stretches

Stand with the feet slightly apart, hands at the sides. Raise one arm sideways, then over the head, and then across the head to the other side. Repeat for the other side. 5 to 10 repetitions

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LEGS

- Toe Touches
Stand feet together, bend forward slowly until you touch your toes. You may not be able to do so at first, but keep trying to. Keep the Knees locked. Eventually you will be able to put your palms on the floor
- Floor Stretch
Sit on the floor, feet straight in front of you. Bend forward gently to touch your toes. When you get to the point you can grab your toes, gently pull yourself down, the goal is to place the forehead on the knees.
- Split Floor Stretch
Sit on the floor, feet as wide apart as comfortable. Reach forward to each foot separately, grabbing the foot and pulling forward. Alternate sides several times.
- Lunges
This is a strengthening/stretching movement. Take a short step forward, then lower your weight into it. Stand up on the front leg, bringing the feet together, then repeat for the other side. Start with small steps, then over time, lunge further and deeper.
- Runners Stretch
stand facing a wall, or other support. Place one foot back, and then bend the front knee, placing weight on the back foot. Apply weight until the heel touches on the back foot. Over time, put the foot farther and farther back.
- Quad Stretch
Sit on the floor, with one leg straight forward, and one leg tucked underneath your butt. Lean back slightly, and place your hands on the floor behind you. Slowly lean back.

SPLITS

The splits are an advanced stretch. That being said, there is a way to go about getting them. Unless you're an athlete, if you practice them, do it with a partner. Also, do them in this order (as listed) exactly as listed.

- Floor Stretch
10 times
- Split Floor Stretch
20 times each side
- Front Splits
Get 2 chairs. Place them about shoulder width apart. Stand between them. Put one foot forward, and the other foot back. Keep inching them farther apart, which will cause you to go lower. Very quickly (most people should be able to do this) you will get to a point where you can support your weight on the chairs. From there, keep lowering until you get to a good stretch, then hold for 20 seconds, and then push yourself back up with your arms. Repeat for the other side. Do each side 4 times
- Side splits.
This is the very advanced one, and the most dangerous. Serious injury can result if done improperly. Do with a partner in case something happens. If you're going to do the splits, please follow this routine exactly. If done in it's entirety (just the splits part) it's fairly injury free if you're already reasonably athletic. I've been doing them solo for years, but remember I'm a personal trainer with years of being instructed in this.

Stand with the feet apart, and push the legs apart, straight to the sides. When at a very comfortable width, bend forward, and place your hands on the floor. Support most of your weight on your hands, and slowly work your feet apart. When at a comfortable stretch, shift some of your weight to your legs by pushing backwards. The strain will rise very fast, so only shift a little. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Shift forward onto the hands again, and inch the legs apart as far as they will go. Shift the weight back onto them, and hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Shift the weight forward again, push the legs even further, and shift the weight back onto the legs. Hold for another 30 or so seconds. Shift the weight forward, bring the legs together, lower to the knees, then get up. Walk around a bit to readjust the ligaments and tendons, shake the legs out gently.

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STRENGTHENING

2 times per week

All Strengthening is to be done to both sides equally. Start with the weak side (usually offhand) and go to failure. ONLY MATCH that number of repetitions with the strong side until they are even.

All exercises are for 3 sets until failure. This means that a weight is selected so that the first set takes about 15 repetitions until it cannot be lifted any further. The weight is put down, and either the other side is done with the same weight, or the same side is done 45 seconds later. The 2nd and 3rd sets will be less repetitions until failure as the muscle will be fatigued. The weight is smoothly raised up and then smoothly lowered. Relaxing the muscle so the weight drops down will cause injuries.

WRISTS

- Wrist Curls
Sit in a dinner type chair with no arm rest. Lean forward and place the back of the forearm on the leg, with the wrist hanging over the knee. Take a small weight (soup can, anything small enough to hold in the hand, eventually you will need a dumbbell set as your wrists get stronger) hold the weight in your hand, with the wrist relaxed so it hangs straight down. Curl the wrist so that it points upward with the weight. Start with enough weight so that the first set is about 15 repetitions until it can't be lifted any further. Do 2 more sets until failure (the weight can't be lifted any further) repeat for the other side. Only allow 45 seconds between sets.
- Reverse wrist curls
Same as above, but with the back of the wrist upwards, and the front of the forearm on the leg.

ARMS

- Bicep curls
Stand with the feet roughly together, hands at the sides. Take a weight in one hand, and curl the weight up, bending the elbow, while keeping the upper arm straight up and down. Curl up as far as you can go, and lower the weight back down under control.
- Tricep Press
Stand with the feet together, or sit in a dinner/folding type chair. Take a weight in one hand, and point that arm's elbow towards the ceiling, with the hand behind the back. Push the weight straight up over the head, keeping the upper arm from moving.
- Pushup
If you are capable, instead of doing the tricep press, do pushups or from the knee pushups instead.

SHOULDERS

- Front Raises
Stand with the feet together, hands at the sides. Place a weight in one hand. Raise it straight in front of you to up over your head, with the back of the wrist upwards. Smoothly lower to the waist.
- Side Raises.
As Above, but straight out to the sides.
- Rotator Cuff Exercise.
VERY IMPORTANT And for you macho types out there, don't be surprised if you're doing puny weights. The rotator cuff muscle is about the size of a pencil. When I was powerlifting, and doing shoulder presses of 85 pounds per shoulder for sets of 20, my rotator cuff exercise was only for 15 pounds. Most people start out with about 1 to 2 pounds, or a can of soup. This is one of the most used muscles in fencing, and keeping it working is critical.
This exercise is to be done ONLY for 2 sets of 10 reps. At first, do NOT go to failure until you've strengthened it some already. It's a tiny muscle and tears very easily.
Sit on a dinner chair sideways, so that the arm being exercised is straight out to the side and supported by the back of the chair, but the elbow hangs over the side of the chair. Grasp a weight in the hand. Lower it down as far forward as is comfortable. You will feel a stretch in the shoulder at the bottom of the exercise. Raise the weight while keeping the arm on the chair - back to the straight up position, then smoothly lower it back down.