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Keeping Kayak Fit Year Round

Lucky you! You have decided to get out your kayak and spend the day on one of the many beautiful bodies of water surrounding us in the Pacific Northwest. If you're like most of us, you have abandoned your gym routine in favor of sunny weather activities. That is great, except we want to be sure your body is up to the task of paddling.

Whether you are a novice paddler or a regular of the sport, it is important to keep your muscles strong and balanced so that you are able to enjoy kayaking in the future, injury free. Several key areas should be targeted for paddling that will help you succeed in the sport: core strength, shoulder stability, and flexibility. In this article, we will cover some basic stretches and exercises that will keep you in paddling shape year round.

CORE STRENGTH EXERCISES

Planks: To begin, get on the floor and lay flat on your stomach. Contract your core muscles, then prop yourself up on your elbows and lift your hips so that your body is in a long, straight line and balancing between your forearms and your toes. Make sure you push up through your shoulders, and avoid letting yourself sag through your chest. Hold this position for one minute or less if you are not able to maintain proper form. Rest and repeat three times.

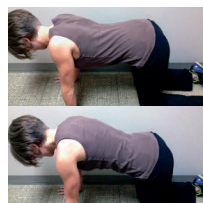


Side Planks: To start, lay on your side on the floor. Next, prop yourself up on one shoulder and lift your hips so that they balance between your feet and your shoulder. Keep your chest and hips perpendicular to the floor, making sure not to let yourself sag.



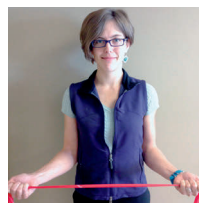
*Both plank exercises can be modified by performing them from the knees instead of the feet, which will reduce the difficulty.

SHOULDER STABILITY EXERCISES



Serratus Press Up: Get onto your hands and knees, with hands positioned directly under your shoulders. Keeping your elbows straight, press up between your shoulder blades, and then slowly lower your trunk down, bringing your shoulder blades as close together as possible. Repeat 10 times and perform 2 sets.

*This exercise can be made more challenging by performing it from a modified plank (on knees) or push up position.



Shoulder External Rotation: Standing with your elbows at your sides with a 90 degree bend, palms facing upwards, hold a piece of elastic band between your hands at shoulder width apart. Keep your elbows at your side and slowly rotate your arms outward. Then slowly bring your arms back to their starting position. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

FLEXIBILITY STRETCHES



Pec Stretch: Stand with your arm against a wall with your elbow and shoulder in a 90/90 position. Turn your whole body away from your arm until you feel a good stretch in the front of your shoulder and into your chest. Hold this position for 30 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times.



Latissimus Dorsi Stretch: Standing in front of a counter or high table, place both arms on the surface and lean forward. Then push your hips back, creating a good stretch under your arms. Deepen the stretch by pushing your hips outward on each side and notice how you feel the stretch intensify on the same side.

Stretches are especially important to perform after a workout, but they also feel good and help to loosen your muscles prior to a paddling outing. Strengthening exercises should be performed 3-4 days per week, providing rest days so your body has time to recuperate.

If you have pain that prevents you from performing these exercises, or other activities you love, or you if would like a more personalized approach to sport-specific training, please contact your local Therapeutic Associates Physical Therapist at: www.therapeuticassociates.com/Locations

