

by CNS

THE MOVES: An oblique forward raise with shoulder internal rotation.

WORKS ON: This exercise isolates the supraspinatus muscle, which is a crucial component of the rotator cuff (a group of muscles and tendons that stabilize the shoulder joint).

ROTATOR CUFF EXERCISE - Firefighter Phil Valoff rotates his outstretched arms as if dumping out a soda. CNS Photo by Nadia Borowski Scott.

SETUP: This exercise is performed on the plane of motion halfway between a forward shoulder raise and a lateral shoulder raise (approximately 45 degrees to the body). Visualize holding two cans of soda with the elbows straight, arms in the 45-degree plane and the hands 6 inches away from the thighs. This exercise is best performed in front of a mirror for symmetry and feedback.

STEPS: Rotate the arms as a unit from the shoulders like you are dumping the soda out (thumbs should be pointing toward the ground). Squeeze the shoulder blades back and down, and hold them there during the entire exercise. Keeping the thumbs pointed down, raise the arms to just below shoulder height and return.

REPETITIONS: Use light dumbbells (8 ounces to 3 pounds) for three sets of 15-30 repetitions.

PRECAUTIONS: People with impingement syndrome (a common arm injury) should consult with their physician before attempting this exercise. Avoid using more than 5 pounds for rotator-cuff strengthening. Shoulder-blade movement must be minimal for this exercise to be effective.

OPTIONS: Very light rubber tubing can be substituted for the resistance.

Fitness Forum: Rotator cuff benefits from strengthening exercise by CNS