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SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENT SECTION

The Serratus Punch[☆]

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Shoulder pain is common, especially with overhead tasks. A common misconception is that the rotator cuff should be trained with internal and external rotation exercises. The shoulder girdle is complex due to its inherent instability. This allows a tremendous range of mobility, but comes with a price. Namely, overuse injuries from repetitive strain especially with lifting, throwing, striking, etc.

One of the hidden keys to managing shoulder dysfunction is to activate the muscles responsible for stabilizing the shoulder blade from below. If the shoulder blade (scapulae) is fixed then the arm (head of the humerus) can glide more easily when the arm is raised overhead. Most people with shoulder pain have shrugged shoulders due to postural tension. This disturbs the ideal movement pattern of the ball and socket joint.

To help stabilize the shoulder working the serratus anterior is helpful in “grooving” a better pattern of scapular stability to offset the tension in the shoulder shruggers. The Serratus Punch is an ideal exercise to facilitate this pattern.

This movement is identical to Bruce Lee’s famous “One Inch Punch”. It is a small but potentially powerful movement that grooves the pattern for stabilizing the core while mobilizing the shoulder girdle.

Exercise instruction

- Lie on your back preferably on a long, round foam roll
- Hold a dumbbell in your hand
- Extend your arm with your arm turned out so that the back of your hand faces away from your body (thumb towards your head and little finger towards your waist) (see Fig. 1a)

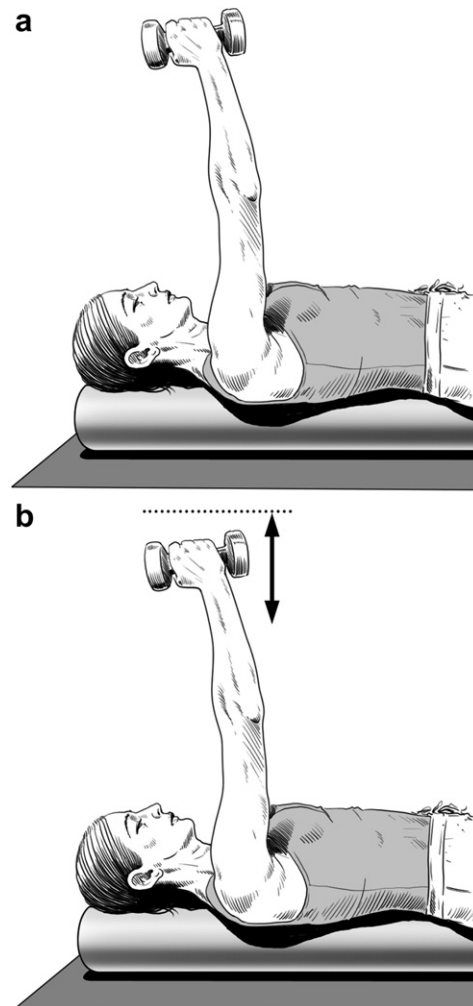


Figure 1 Serratus Punch with dumbbell a) start position b) 1 inch punch motion.

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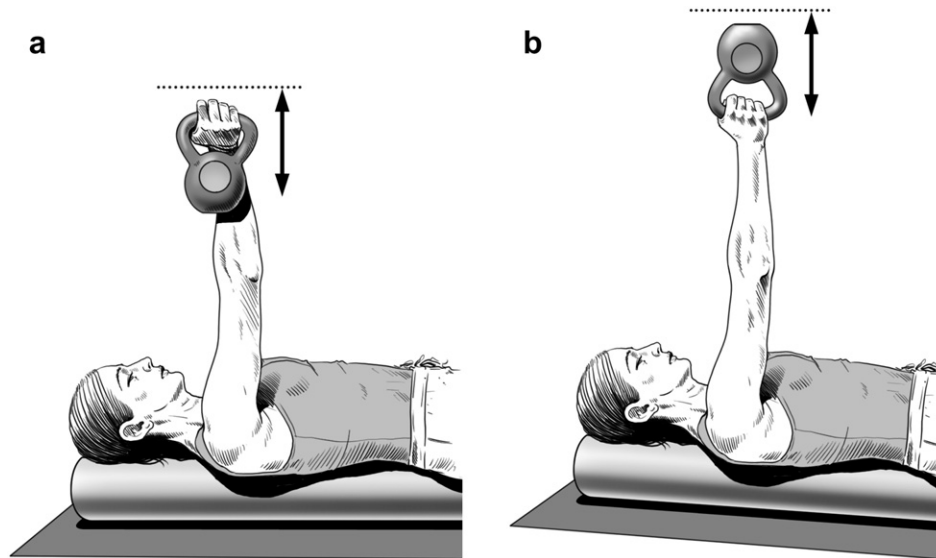


Figure 2 Serratus Punch with kettlebell a) rack position b) bottoms up.

- Then, reach up even further as far as possible towards the ceiling – “the 1 inch punch” (see [Fig. 1b](#))
- Lower your arm without bending your elbow
- Repeat

Progressions

Intermediate – Use a kettlebell supported on your forearm in the “rack position” – (see [Fig. 2a](#))

Advanced – Use a kettlebell in the “bottom’s up” position (see [Fig. 2b](#))