

# 2 Upper-Body Workouts for Pitchers That Build Strength and Durability

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The upper body is crucial to baseball pitching success, because it imparts the force from the legs into the ball. A strong upper body can improve your performance, whereas weakness or injury in this area can limit you.

## Principles of Upper-Body Workouts for Pitchers

1. It's important to train the large and small muscles of the upper body: chest, back, shoulders, biceps and triceps. All of these muscles can aid performance and help prevent injury.
2. Keep training in perspective. Pitchers are not body builders, power lifters or Olympic lifters. Pitchers lift weights to improve their pitching. Too much volume, too much weight or too great a training frequency can interfere with pitching or lead to overuse injuries.
3. Good intentions can cause the problems you want to avoid. Attempts to prevent potential injuries by using isolation exercises can backfire. Consider the shoulder; the rotator cuff is a really small place. Thus, overdoing biceps and rotator cuff exercises (i.e., training them so hard that those muscles get a lot larger) can cause the very problems you are trying to prevent.
4. [Exercise bands](#) and neutral grips are your friends. [Exercise bands](#) provide a low-intensity way to improve the endurance of smaller muscles like the rotator cuff. This in turn may also prevent the hypertrophy that can lead to the shoulder problems you hope to prevent. Narrow and neutral grips also allow you to train your upper-body muscles while minimizing stress to the shoulder.



# Exercises

Exercises Incorporate these foundational exercises into your training on a regular basis.

## **Close-Grip Bench Press**

This exercise trains the chest, shoulders and triceps while minimizing shoulder stress. To perform it, grab the bar with a grip width narrower than shoulder-width. As you lower the bar to your chest, keep your elbows "in" so that they brush against your torso. Press the bar up until your arms are fully extended.

## **Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Bench Press**

Perform this exercise by rotating your hands so your palms face each other. As you lower the dumbbells to the sides of your chest, keep your elbows in and allow them to brush against your body.

## **Close-Grip, Supine Pull-Ups**

This exercise trains the upper back, shoulders and biceps. Grip the pull-up bar narrower than shoulder-width. Your palms should face toward you. Lower yourself until your arms are extended. From there, pull yourself up until your chin clears the bar.

## **Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Rows**

Stand with a dumbbell in each hand. Push your hips back and lower your upper body until it is parallel to the ground. Rotate both palms toward each other. Keeping your elbows in so they brush against your body, pull the dumbbells toward the sides of your body at stomach level. Lower and repeat.

## **Kettlebell Press**

Stand with a kettlebell in your right hand. Bring it to your right shoulder, allowing it to rest against your forearm and your shoulder. Press the kettlebell up and slightly behind your body until it's in line with your hips. Lower and perform with the other arm. Continue alternating. The unique design of the kettlebell allows you to perform these presses while minimizing the stress to your shoulders.

## **Neutral-Grip Front Raises**

Stand with a dumbbell in each hand. Rotate your hands so your palms face toward you. From this position, raise your right arm until it is parallel to the ground. Lower and repeat with your left arm. Continue alternating.

## Sample Programs

### Off-Season

Do the off-season workout twice a week, preferably with two to three days of rest between workouts. This is a high-volume workout with only 30-60 seconds of recovery between sets.

#### Day One

- Close-Grip Bench Press: 3x12-15 at 60-70%
- Close-Grip Supine Pull-Ups: 3x12-15
- Neutral-Grip Front Raises: 3x15-20
- Superset: Side Raises and Rear Deltoids: 3x15-20 each
- Superset: Biceps and triceps: 3x15-20 each

#### Day Two

- Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Bench Press: 3x12-15
- Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Rows: 3x12-15
- Kettlebell Press: 3x12-1
- Dumbbell Shrugs: 3x15-20
- Superset: Biceps and triceps: 3x15-20 each

### In Season

Do the in-season workout once per week, preferably between pitching outings. If that's not possible, perform it the day after a pitching outing. The volume is slightly higher than during the pre-season, and rest is only 30 seconds between sets.

- Superset: Close-Grip Bench Press: 3x15-20 at 60% and Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Rows: 3x15-20
- Superset: Neutral-Grip Dumbbell Bench Press 3x15-20 and Close-Grip Supine Pull-ups: 3x15-20
- Kettlebell Press: 3x15-20
- Superset: Side Raises and Rear Deltoids: 3x15-20 each