

PREVENTION & REHABILITATION: SELF-MANAGEMENT: PATIENT SECTION

The Halo exercise for shoulder and thoracic spine mobility[☆]



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An exercise that combines both mobility and stability in one fluid graceful movement, the Halo will loosen up the shoulders and thoracic spine, making them stronger and more resilient. In addition the Halo is also a useful tool for teaching reflexive stability in the stable core cylinder. Three different postures involving the Halo are suggested in order to achieve the best cumulative results – tall standing, tall kneeling, and half kneeling.

Holding the kettlebell

- In the starting position, hold the kettlebell upside down by its horns.
- The bottom flat part of the kettlebell will be facing the ceiling.
- Make sure all your fingers are wrapped around the horns, with the little and ring fingers gripping.
- Grip especially hard with your little and ring fingers.
- Keep a neutral wrist throughout the Halo – do not let the kettlebell pull your wrists into flexion in any direction.
- It is important to 'stay strong'.

The half-kneeling position (see Fig. 1)

Positioning your body

- Begin in a lunge position with one knee on the ground.
 - Legs shoulder width distance apart.
- Bring the kettlebell into the start position.
- Stack your hips, shoulders and head over the knee on the ground.
- Level your hips horizontally and square them towards the front.
- Tuck your coccyx under and contract your gluteal muscles while staying tall over the knee on the floor.
 - You will feel the abdominal muscles contract.
- Lengthen your body through the knee on the floor.
- Keeping your abdominal muscles activated, relax your gluteal muscles and quadriceps, balancing your weight over your knee.
- You should avoid leaning back using your quadriceps to assist maintaining balance
 - Also avoid leaning forward onto the raised leg and foot.
- In the proper half kneeling stance it should be possible to lift the front foot off the floor for a short while.

Performing the Halo

- When you have achieved the proper half kneeling stance, begin moving the kettlebell around the your head slowly for repetitions

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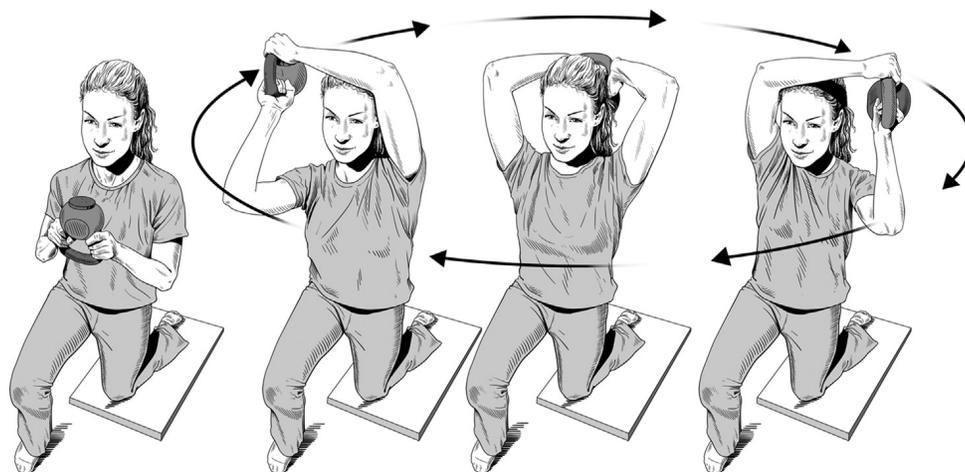


Figure 1 Halo in half kneeling.

- Moving the kettlebell slowly around your head, begin by pushing it up and sideways over your right shoulder, pointing the flat bottom of the kettlebell at the wall behind you.
- Then, continuing with the movement, rotate the kettlebell behind your head so that the bottom is now facing the floor.
- Continue rotating the kettlebell around your head to once again point the bottom toward the wall behind you, over your left shoulder, and finally complete the

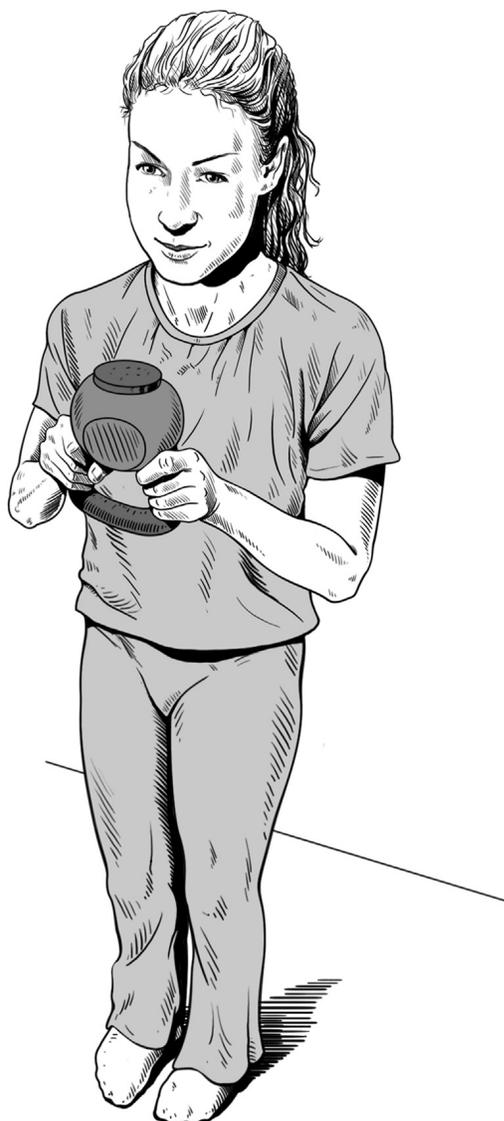


Figure 2 Halo in tall standing.



Figure 3 Halo in tall kneeling.

movement by bringing the kettlebell back in front of you to the start position.

- At the end of each repetition, pause for a brief moment to reset your arms and chest.
- Repeat for several repetitions and then change direction.

Progressions and regressions

As you become increasingly more proficient in the half kneeling position, progress the exercise by moving your front foot towards the midline, with the end goal of achieving an **in-line lunge position**. It may be necessary to use a mirror to make sure your hips are square towards the front, and level to the ground. The end goal is to get in-line. Half-kneeling in the in-line lunge position is the hardest Halo, because it amplifies postural compensations. As reflexive stability and strength grows, narrowing the stance in this way is the best way to progress the exercise.

If the half kneeling position (shoulder width) is performed with poor form it is best to “peel-back” or regress the exercise to the **tall standing position**. This can then be progressed to the **tall kneeling position**. Then the half kneeling (shoulder width) can be attempted again. Until finally the half kneeling in-line position can be accomplished.

The tall standing position (see Fig. 2)

- Bring the kettlebell into the starting position.
- Bring your feet together and pull your kneecaps up into the your thighs, contracting your quadriceps.
- Keep your gluteal muscles as tight as possible – ‘pinching a coin’ – to protect your back throughout the exercise.
- All the same Halo instructions described above should be applied.

The tall kneeling position (see Fig. 3)

- This begins with both knees on the floor, with about two fists width between the knees.
 - Use cushioned kneepads if your knees are sensitive.
- Bring the kettlebell into the starting position.
- Tuck your coccyx under, and contract the gluteals – ‘pinching the coin’ – while staying tall.
- Your shins should be parallel, and your toes can either be pointed or tucked under, whichever is more comfortable.
- Begin moving the kettlebell around your head for repetitions (all the same form applies using the same sequence described as above in tall standing), with a slight pause and reset each time.
- Repeat and then change directions.

Some helpful cues to remember

- Use safe lifting mechanics to bring the kettlebell into the start position in any of the three stances.
- Keep your shoulders down and away from your ears.
- Squeeze your gluteal muscles and root your body through your feet into the floor in tall standing, and root through both knees in tall kneeling.
- In half kneeling, keep your head, shoulders and hips balanced directly over your knee – with very little weight on the outstretched foot on the floor.
- Keep your wrists neutral and ‘strong’ throughout the Halo – don’t let the weight of the kettlebell pull them into flexion.
- Remember that you are moving the kettlebell around your head and body (the cylinder), instead of moving your head and body around the kettlebell!
- Although training with mirrors is usually discouraged, the Halo is one exercise that is greatly enhanced by using a mirror for visual feedback.