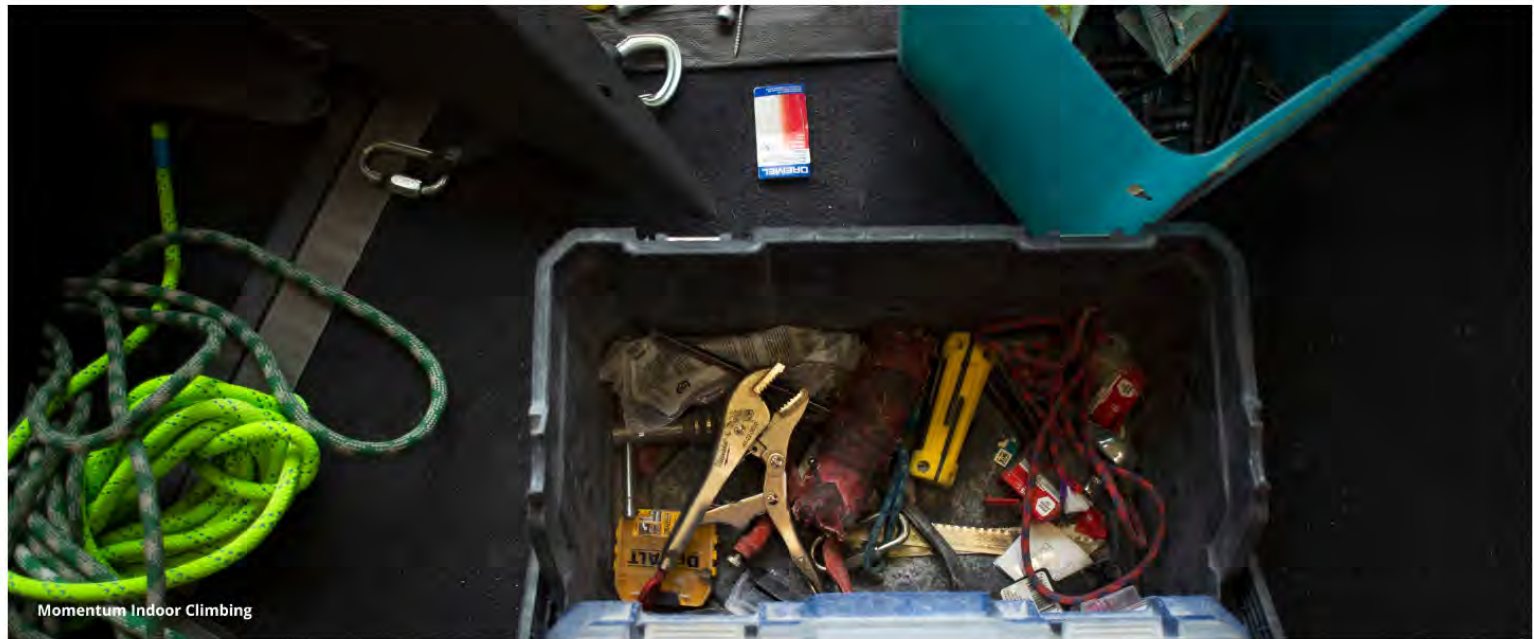


Preventing Injury As A Climbing Wall Worker

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in [CWA Blog](#), [CWA Summit](#)



As a climbing wall worker, each day demands a delicate balance between exerting energy to set routes and boulder problems and allowing enough time for recovery to enjoy climbing yourself.

[Click here to view photos and videos of the exercises described in this article](#)

Climbing wall workers are stripping routes, carrying milk crates of holds to the wash station, washing holds, setting new routes, hauling buckets of holds (if sport setting), and forerunning to test beta. The tasks are repetitive, laborious, and physically demanding. Yet, amid the pursuit of crafting the ideal route or boulder problem, the risk of overuse injuries remains ever-present, underscoring the crucial need to prioritize self-care. Ensuring that our bodies are adequately cared for not only safeguards against injury but also preserves the energy needed to pursue our personal climbing goals.

[Register for Dr. Vagy's Pre-Conference](#)

Climbing Wall Worker Quick Tips

Below are a few quick tips for climbing wall workers on how to warm-up for the specific demands of the job.

Reaching Overhead to Set or Strip Holds

- It's a common task for climbing wall workers to reach high overhead with heavy holds and volumes to set and strip routes, particularly if they are overhung or in a cave. However, climbing wall workers may lack the full shoulder mobility to reach fully overhead without compensating by arching their back or shrugging their shoulder. Therefore, it's important to incorporate exercises to improve overhead range of motion.
- One effective exercise involves using a resistance band to assist with overhead end-range motion. Start by grabbing onto a resistance band that is anchored to the wall or a stable object. Lift your arm in front of you with the palm facing upward. Once your hand reaches the level of your shoulder, rotate your palm so that it faces downward and allow the tension from the resistance band guide your arm overhead. Repeat for 2 sets of 10 repetitions. During the exercise, make sure important to maintain engagement of the core muscles and keep the neck relaxed to avoid unnecessary strain.



A climbing wall worker showing good technique and mobility while stripping a boulder set

Carrying Crates of Climbing Holds



A climbing wall worker showing good form while lifting a crate of holds

If you're a climbing wall worker, you'll inevitably find yourself tasked with carrying heavy crates of holds. Whether it's bringing them to the base of a route or boulder you're setting or transporting them to wash, it's just a part of setting process. Carrying crates engages numerous upper body muscles, but it's common to fall into the habit of slumping the shoulders forward and overly pulling the elbows back instead of properly engaging the shoulder blades. This reliance on the biceps and lat muscles instead of the stabilizing middle trapezius muscles can lead to overuse injuries.

To train the shoulder blade muscles to engage properly while carrying heavy loads, cable rows are an effective exercise. However, for a more task-specific approach, consider performing rows while holding a crate of holds. While it may look unconventional, this exercise targets the correct muscles and mimics the movement involved in carrying crates, making it an excellent choice for warming-up before route setting. Perform these rows with a cable stack or resistance band for 2 sets of 10.

Cleaning Holds

- Cleaning or powerwashing or holds isn't a feat of strength but can be an act of endurance. Over time, the act can be stressful on the top shoulder, putting it in a compressed position. This is especially the case if a climbing wall worker is lacking adequate inward shoulder motion. Improving the range of motion of the shoulder into internal rotation and following that with a light exercise to use the range of motion can make the shoulder more resilient to long days cleaning holds.
- To train shoulder internal rotation mobility, you can perform a sleeper stretch for 30 seconds on each side. Lie on your side and bend the bottom arm to 90 degrees at the elbow. Use the opposite arm to gently press the forearm towards the ground, stretching the back of the shoulder. Be gentle with this stretch, you shouldn't push too hard, especially if you have stiff shoulders. Follow this gentle stretch with powerband archer pulls. Grab one end of the band with your arm outstretched below you. Grasp the other end of the band and pull back with your elbow bent and your shoulder blades engaged – just as an archer would pull back an arrow in a bow. Repeated 2 sets of 10 repetitions.

Climbing Wall Workers CWA Workshop

Are you a climbing wall worker and want to learn more? Check out the upcoming workshop at the CWA Summit hosted by Jared Vagy "The Climbing Doctor." The workshop is designed for climbers and coaches who have struggled with injuries themselves or within their teams. It provides a comprehensive overview of the most common injuries in rock climbing and a focused understanding of the root causes. **The workshop is highly interactive to help you learn a systematic approach to climbing injury prevention**

Register at Checkout

From the author: Special thanks to the climbing wall workers at Sender One Climbing Los Angeles

About the Author



Jared Vagy is a doctor of physical therapy who specializes in treating climbing injuries. He is the author of the Amazon #1 best-seller “Climb Injury-Free,” teaches [Climbing Injury Professional Education for Medical Providers](#), and is the developer of the [Rock Rehab Protocols](#). He has published numerous articles on injury prevention and lectures internationally. Dr. Vagy is on the teaching faculty at the University of Southern California, one of the top doctor of physical therapy programs in the USA. He is a board-certified orthopedic clinical specialist. He is passionate about climbing and enjoys working with climbers of all ability levels, ranging from

novice climbers to the top professional climbers in the world.

For more education, check out the Instagram page [@theclimbingdoctor](#)

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