

# Shoulder Abduction Test

Patient's name: Lisa Montgomery Age: 47 Gender: Female  
Examiner: Dr. Jacob Wells Date: November 25, 2024

## Test procedure

1. Ask the patient to sit.
2. Ask the patient to actively raise the arm in which they are experiencing symptoms and to rest their hand on top of their head. If the patient is unable to do so, you may passively raise it yourself.
3. Observe and ask the patient for worsening or relief of symptoms.
4. Test the other arm as well if it is also experiencing symptoms.



## Results and interpretation

- ☒ **Positive:** Symptoms are reduced in the affected arm when the hand is resting on the head. This indicates that the traction force to nerves and the lower brachial plexus trunks are relieved, reducing pain; while the mechanical traction increases while the arm is hanging on the side, increasing symptoms.
- ☐ **Negative:** The patient experiences worsening or no relief of the symptoms while they have their hand on their head. If the symptoms worsen, it indicates inter-scalene compression.

## Additional notes

Lisa's symptoms were consistent with C5-C6 nerve root irritation based on her complaint of radiating pain to the shoulder and arm. The positive result aligns with her history of neck discomfort and prior imaging showing degenerative changes in the cervical spine. Recommended follow-up includes physical therapy with cervical traction exercises and monitoring for any worsening of symptoms.

Magee, D. J. (2008). *Orthopedic physical assessment (5th edition)*. Elsevier.

The Student Physical Therapist. (2017, May 21). *Bakody's sign*. YouTube.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulex5\\_XoU04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulex5_XoU04)

Wainner, R. S., Fritz, J. M., Irrgang, J. J., Boninger, M. L., Delitto, A., & Allison, S. (2003). Reliability and diagnostic accuracy of the clinical examination and patient self-report measures for cervical radiculopathy. *Spine*, 28(1), 52–62. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00007632-200301010-00014>