



Rotator Cuff Repair Rehabilitation Protocol

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PT Frequency: 2-4 times per week

ROM Restrictions: Passive shoulder ROM only for 4-6 weeks (goal of 140° FF, minimum of 40 ER°)

Brace: Abduction sling for 4-6 weeks, taken off only for exercises and hygiene

Phase I: Week 0-4

- Shoulder abduction sling x 4-6 weeks on at all times except exercises and hygiene
- Active ROM elbow, wrist and hand
- True passive (ONLY) shoulder ROM (**NO ACTIVE MOTION**)
- Pendulum exercises
- Supine elevation in scapular plane = 140 degrees
- External rotation to tolerance with arm at side (emphasize ER, minimum goal 40 degrees)
- Scapular stabilization exercises (side lying)
- Deltoid isometrics in neutral (submaximal) as ROM improves
- No pulley/canes until 6 weeks (these are active motions)

Phase II: Weeks 4-6

- Discontinue sling use when approved by Dr. Boden
- Continue to work on Passive ROM as in Phase I
- Begin AAROM and advance to AROM as tolerated
- Elevation in scapular plane and external rotation
- Cuff isometrics with the arm at the side beginning at 6 weeks
- **NO internal rotation or behind back until 6 weeks**

Phase III: Weeks 6-12

- AAROM to AROM as tolerated
- Elevation in scapular plane and external rotation
- Begin internal rotation as tolerated
- Light stretching at end ranges
- Cuff isometrics with the arm at the side
- Upper body ergometry

Phase IV: Months 3-12

- Full ROM as tolerated with passive stretching at end ranges
- Advance strengthening as tolerated: isometrics → bands → light weights (1-5lbs); 8-12 reps/2-3 sets per rotator cuff, deltoid, and scapular stabilizers
- Only do strengthening 3x/week to avoid rotator cuff tendinitis



- Begin eccentrically resisted motions, plyometrics (e.g., weighted ball toss), proprioception (e.g. body blade)
- Begin sports related rehab at 4.5 months, including advance conditioning
- Return to throwing at 6 months
- Throw from pitcher's mound at 9 months
- Collision sports at 9 months
- MMI is usually at 12 months post-op

Exercise	Week													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	16	20	24
Initial Exercises:														
Active ROM: Elbow, Wrist, & Hand														
Pendulums														
Supine Elevation in Scapular Plane (140°)														
Scapular Stabilization														
Deltoid Isometric in Neutral														
Passive ROM														
Pulley/Cane Exercises														
Sling Discontinuation														
Advanced Exercises:														
Begin Active ROM (No IR until 6 weeks)														
Cuff Isometrics														
Light Stretching at End Ranges														
Upper Body Ergometer														
Eccentrically Resisted Motions/Plyometrics														
Sports Related Rehab														
Cardiovascular Exercises:														
Bike														
Elliptical Trainer														
Rowing														
Stair stepper														
Agility Exercises:														
Running Progression														
Functional Sports Test														
High Level Activities:														
Golf Progression														
Return to Throwing														
Return to Throwing from the Pitcher's Mound at 9 months														
Return to Full/Collision Sport at 9 months post-op														

Adapted from Dr. Jorge Chahla's post-operative protocol created by Howard Head Physical Therapy, Jill Monson, PT, OCS and Jon Schoenecker, PT, OCS, CSCS