

Massive Rotator Cuff Repair Rehabilitation Protocol

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PT Frequency: 2-4 times per week

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

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

Phase I: Week 0-6 (Passive Range of Motion)

Goals:

- PROM – 140 degrees supine elevation in scapular plane, 40 degrees external rotation with arm at side
- Decrease pain, Decrease muscle atrophy, Educate regarding joint protection
- Provide the patient with instructions for home exercises (last pages) 5 x per day

Precautions:

- Shoulder abduction sling x 6 weeks, taken off only for exercises and hygiene
- No active shoulder ROM
- PROM beginning week 1

Teaching:

- Emphasize home, supine, passive well-arm assisted PROM (FF and ER as above)
- Instruct in regular icing techniques or cold therapy device (use as much as possible out of 24 hours for 8-10 days)
- Ice packs for 20 - 30 minutes intervals, especially at the end of an exercise session
- Monitor for edema in forearm, hand, or finger

Exercises:

- True passive (ONLY) shoulder ROM (**NO ACTIVE MOTION**)
- Pendulum exercises
- Active elbow, wrist, hand ROM - Grasping and gripping lightweight objects
- 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 6-12 (Active Range of Motion)

Goals:

- Full range of motion by end of week 12
- Emphasis should on range of motion
- Decrease pain, Increase functional activities, Scapular stabilization

Precautions:

- No sling use
- No active IR until 8 weeks
- No strengthening

Teaching:

- Encourage continued stretching at home. Limited only by pain.
- Ice after exercise.

Exercises:

- 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
- Light stretching at end ranges
- Cuff isometrics with the arm at the side
- Upper body ergometry

Phase III: 3-12 Months (Strengthening)

Goals:

- 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 8 weeks)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	16	20	24	
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