

Rotator Cuff Repair Guidelines

Phase 1: Week 0-6 (Passive Range of Motion)

Goals: Protect repair, prevent stiffness, reduce pain, and independently perform ADL'S

Abduction sling at all times, may remove only for bathing & exercises

Instruct in bathing, axillary care, changing clothes & proper placement of sling

Ice as much as possible (20 min each hour) for 48-72 hours then post activity as needed for swelling/pain

No AROM of shoulder, lifting or excessive stretching, No pulleys

Pendulums

Rom cervical spine, elbow, wrist, and fingers

Isometrics, retractions & depressions of scapula musculature

Day 7: Start shoulder PROM (Pendulums & Table slides)

General conditioning such as walking and stationary bicycle

Day 28: May initiate AAROM for flexion in supine position (only for small/medium tears)

Begin biceps and triceps isometrics

May use heat before exercise, ice afterwards

Phase 2: Week 7-12 (Active Range of Motion)

Goals: Active motion, protection & avoid overstressing repair, reduce pain, restore full PROM

Discontinue sling at 6 weeks

Continue above: AAROM, gentle stretching & PROM to full, preiscapular exercises

May begin pulley exercises & RTC isometrics

Start gentle AROM (start with wall climbs)

May use operative extremity for light ADL's

Criteria for progression to Phase 3

Week 10 for small/medium tears, week 12 for large/massive tears

Full/near full AROM

Phase 3: Week 13-16 (Strengthening)

Goals: full AROM, dynamic shoulder stability, restoration of shoulder strength, power & endurance

Continue above

Dynamic stabilization exercises

Initiate graduated strengthening program (initially limit 5lb and no overhead lifting)

ER & IR with exercise bands, ER side-lying, lateral raises

Full can in scapular plane (no empty can abduction exercises)

Elbow flexion/ extension

Initiate light functional activities

Criteria for progression to Phase 4

Tolerating progression to low-level functional activities

Return of strength & dynamic shoulder stability

Phase 4: Week 17-22 (Advanced Strengthening)

Goals: maintain full, non-painful ROM, advanced conditioning & functional use, improve muscular strength, power & endurance, gradual return to functional activities

Continue above & progression of strengthening

Advanced proprioceptive & neuromuscular control activities

Light sports (golf chipping, putting, tennis ground strokes) or work simulated activities if doing well

Week 20 initiate interval sports programs

Weeks 24 full return to sports or work if near full ROM & strength

Exceptions to Protocol

If subscapularis repair, limit ER ROM to 0 degrees for 6 weeks

Is biceps tenodesis, avoid terminal elbow extension for 6 weeks

Reference:

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