

AC JOINT RECONSTRUCTION

Post-Operative Physical Therapy Protocol



SCAN FOR THE
ONLINE VERSION



Stanford
MEDICINE

Dear Colleague,

I appreciate your partnership in the rehabilitation of this very special patient of ours. I have instructed the patient that you will be using this protocol. My belief is that the biggest predictor of success is what the patient does at home and consistently. **They should view you not just as a therapist but as a highly educated and skilled teacher** and the patient *must* be an active participant in the rehab process.

To facilitate this, I have included a copy of the rehab protocols I would like the patient to focus on at each time point in the rehab process. Please assist me by encouraging and teaching our mutual patient their home exercises as well.

With your help and the active participation of our patient, I know we can have another fantastic shoulder.

Please do not hesitate to reach out directly to me and my team with any questions at any time.

Respectfully,



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	DAYS 0-7	WEEKS 1-6	WEEKS 6-8	WEEKS 8-12	MONTHS 3-6
Flexion	None <i>Sling</i>	AAROM supine to 90° <i>Broomstick</i>	AAROM to 90°	AAROM → AROM to 120° <i>Relatively pain free</i>	Full
Abduction	None	AAROM to 60°	AAROM to 90°	AAROM → AROM to 120°	Full
IR / ER	None	As tolerated	As tolerated	Light Theraband <i>Pillow in armpit</i>	Increase resistance
Sling	On <i>Even sleeping</i>	Except exercises	D/C	None	None

SUMMARY

Sling	Sling for 6 weeks, even when sleeping; remove only for exercises and personal grooming.
Motion	Hand, wrist, and elbow only for the first week. From week 1: pendulums and supine broomstick AAROM (flexion 90°, abduction 60°, IR/ER as tolerated); abduction to 90° from week 6; AAROM → AROM to 120° from week 8; full range from 3 months.
Strengthening	Isometrics with 1 to 2 finger resistance from week 1. Light Theraband, rows, biceps, triceps, prone scapular retraction, and wall push-ups from week 8. Increase resistance from 3 months.
Return to sport	Running from 3 months. No contact activities until at least 6 months post-op.

As tolerated means pain during exercise no more than 2/10 above baseline. Avoid pushing into pain.

DAYS 0-7

- **Sling x 6 weeks, even when sleeping.**
- Hand squeeze; elbow and wrist AROM.

WEEKS 1–6

- Continue sling x 6 weeks at ALL times (except for exercises and personal grooming).
- Continue hand, wrist, and elbow exercises as per days 0 to 7.
- Begin gentle pendulums.
- **AAROM supine with broomstick (flexion to 90°, abduction 60°, IR/ER as tolerated).**
- Gentle shoulder shrugs and scapular retraction without resistance; isometrics with 1 to 2 finger resistance.
- Stationary bike with sling if desired for conditioning.

WEEKS 6–8

- Discontinue sling and continue above exercises.
- **AAROM supine with broomstick (flexion/abduction to 90°, ER/IR as tolerated).**
- Full pendulums. Treadmill walking.

WEEKS 8–12

- **AAROM flexion/abduction to 120° (broomstick or wall climb), progressing to AROM flexion/abduction to 120° as long as relatively pain free.**
- Light Theraband resistance ER/IR with pillow in armpit (flexion/extension/abduction/scaption to 60°).
- Standing rows, biceps, and supine triceps with Theraband; prone scapular retraction (light weight) and wall push-ups.
- Elliptical with lower extremity only (no handlebars).

MONTHS 3–6

- AAROM and AROM through full range; increase resistance as tolerated.
- Running.
- **No contact activities until at least 6 months post-op.**

WEEK-BY-WEEK PROGRESSION

EXERCISE	1	2	3	4 (1 mo)	5	6	7	8 (2 mo)	9	10	12 (3 mo)	16	20	24 (6 mo)
Initial Exercises														
Sling (even sleeping)														
Hand squeeze; elbow and wrist AROM														
Gentle pendulums														
Full pendulums														
AAROM supine: flexion 90°, abduction 60°														
AAROM supine: flexion/abduction 90°														
Shrugs, scapular retraction; isometrics (1-2 finger)														
Advanced Exercises														
AAROM → AROM flexion/abduction to 120°														
Light Theraband ER/IR; rows, biceps, triceps														
Prone scapular retraction, wall push-ups														
Full AAROM/AROM; increase resistance														
Cardiovascular Exercises														
Stationary bike (with sling)														
Treadmill walking														
Elliptical, legs only (no handlebars)														
Running														
High-Level Activities														
No contact until at least 6 months														

This protocol is a general guideline and does not replace the clinical judgment of the treating therapist and surgeon. Please contact our office with any questions.