

ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

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,



Sai Tummala, MD

Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine

Stanford Medicine

6121 Hollis St, Suite 900, Emeryville, CA 94608 · Office 510-974-2800 · Fax 510-806-2633

	WEEKS 1-6: PROM ONLY	WEEKS 6-12: AAROM → AROM	MONTHS 3-12
Forward flexion	PROM <i>Max 90°</i>	AAROM → AROM <i>Increase as tolerated</i>	Full ROM <i>As tolerated</i>
External rotation at side	PROM <i>Max 40°</i>	AAROM → AROM <i>Increase as tolerated</i>	Full ROM <i>As tolerated</i>
Abduction	PROM <i>Max 60-80°, without rotation</i>	AAROM → AROM <i>Increase as tolerated</i>	Full ROM <i>As tolerated</i>

SUMMARY

Sling	6 weeks at all times, except for personal grooming.
Canes and pulleys	After 6 weeks.
Resisted strengthening	No resisted shoulder motion until 12 weeks. Isometrics with the arm at the side from 8 weeks. No overhead strengthening until 20 weeks.
Return to sport	Sport-related rehabilitation from 4½ months. No full return to sport before 6 months. Throwing at 6 months, from the mound at 9 months. Collision sports at 9 months.

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

DAYS 0–7

- Home exercises given after surgery: pendulums, ROM of the elbow, wrist, and hand, and grip strengthening.
- Sling at all times for 6 weeks, except for personal grooming.

WEEKS 1–6

- **True PROM only.** The rotator cuff tendon is healing back to the bone.
- ROM goals: forward flexion 90°, external rotation 40° at the side, abduction maximum 60 to 80° without rotation.
- Grip strengthening. Table slides.
- Heat before PT, ice after PT.
- **No resisted motions of the shoulder until 12 weeks!**
- No canes or pulleys until 6 weeks, because these are active-assisted exercises.

WEEKS 6–12

- Begin AAROM. Advance to AROM as tolerated.
- ROM goals as above, increasing as tolerated.
- Light passive stretching at end ranges.
- Begin scapular exercises and passive resistance exercise for large muscle groups (pectorals, latissimus).
- Isometrics with the arm at the side beginning at 8 weeks.

MONTHS 3–12

- Advance to full ROM as tolerated with passive stretching at end ranges.
- Advance strengthening as tolerated: isometrics, then bands, then light weights (1 to 5 lb).
- 2 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 for the rotator cuff, deltoid, and scapular stabilizers.
- Strengthen only 3 times a week to avoid rotator cuff tendinitis.
- No overhead strengthening until 20 weeks.
- Begin eccentrically resisted motions, plyometrics (weighted ball toss), and proprioception (body blade).
- Begin sport-related rehabilitation at 4½ months, including advancing conditioning. No full return to sport before 6 months.
- Return to throwing at 6 months. Throwing from the pitcher's mound at 9 months.
- Collision sports at 9 months.
- Maximum medical improvement is usually reached at 12 months and beyond.

CRITERIA TO DISCHARGE FROM THERAPY

- Full active ROM compared with the uninvolved side.
- Pain-free activities of daily living.
- Rotator cuff strength above 80% of the uninvolved side by handheld dynamometer.

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														
Active ROM: elbow, wrist, and hand														
Pendulums														
Grip strengthening														
True passive ROM only														
Table slides														
Maintain sling														
Advanced Exercises														
Canes and pulleys														
Begin assisted active ROM, advance to active ROM														
Light passive stretching at end ranges														
Scapular exercises														
Upper body ergometer														
Isometrics with the arm at the side														
Resisted strengthening: bands, then light weights														
Eccentrics, plyometrics, proprioception														
Sport-related rehabilitation														
Cardiovascular Exercises														
Bike														
Elliptical trainer														
Stair stepper														
Rowing														
Agility Exercises														
Running progression														
Functional sports test														
High-Level Activities														
Golf progression														
Return to throwing at 6 months														
Throwing from the mound at 9 months														
Collision sports at 9 months														

Weeks 1 to 6 are true passive range of motion only. Resisted shoulder exercise does not begin until week 12.

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.