



Rotator Cuff Surgery (Arthroscopic) Recovery and Rehabilitation Protocol

Phase 1: Weeks 1-6

FOCUS: Passive range of motion (PROM).

GOALS:

- Minimize pain and inflammation.
- Maintain integrity of the repair.
- Regain full passive motion of operated shoulder by 6 weeks.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:

- Use pain medications as needed.
- Ice the shoulder (cold pack) as needed.
- Wear shoulder immobilizer at all times (except during exercises & bathing) for first 4 weeks.

PRECAUTIONS:

- NO lifting anything > 1 lb.
- NO active shoulder flexion or abduction is permitted.
- NO reaching or lifting with operated extremity.
- NO pushing up from chair; no pushing open door.

HOME EXERCISES: Begin Day 2 after surgery

- **Codman's Pendulum:** Stand adjacent to a chair or table and bend slightly at the waist. Support your body weight by leaning on the chair or table with the opposite arm. Let the full weight of the operated arm hang freely. Gently swing the operated arm forward and back, side to side as tolerated for 15 seconds. Progress to 3-5 minutes. Repeat 3 times each day.
- **Passive Forward Flexion:** Use a therapy helper or your opposite arm to gently raise arm up in front. Start with arm at your side and passively bring hand to your mouth, forehead and to the top of your head. Do this lying down. Repeat 3 times per day, 10 repetitions.
- **Active and Gentle Passive External Rotation:** With arm at side and elbow flexed 90 degrees, rotate your forearm, bringing hand straight out in front (as though accepting change from a cashier, but elbow stays against your side). Gradually increase active external rotation as tolerated. Repeat 3 times per day, 10 repetitions.
- **Hand/Wrist/Elbow ROM:** Active motion of the elbow, wrist and fingers on the operated side is encouraged. Gripping exercises are allowed.

THERAPISTS: Please call with any questions/concerns.

- OK to do some modalities as indicated (TENS, ultrasound, myofascial release).
- OK to do scapular proprioceptive training, stabilization exercises, isometrics.
- Restrictions: Pulleys, wand exercises, AAROM, AROM.

Phase II: Active Motion Phase (Weeks 7-12 [Month 1.5-3])

FOCUS: Active shoulder range of motion (AROM), start strengthening.



Phase II Continued

GOALS:

- Decrease pain and inflammation.
- Regain full active ROM of operated shoulder.
- Avoid shoulder re-injury.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:

- Use pain medications only as needed.
- Discontinue use of shoulder immobilizer.

PRECAUTIONS:

- NO lifting/pushing/pulling greater than 5-10 lb. (Keep at waist level).
- NO overhead lifting .
- Caution with reaching, lifting, pushing up from chair.

EXERCISES:

- Continue all Phase I exercises described above.
- Add new exercises as prescribed by your therapist.

THERAPISTS

- May initiate as tolerated - Passive stretching, wand exercises, AAROM, AROM, overhead pulley, shoulder shrug, shoulder and elbow isometrics.
- Restrictions: dips, pushups, bench-press, flies, long lever strengthening.

Phase III: Strengthening Phase (Weeks 13+ [Month 3+])

FOCUS: Shoulder strength

GOALS:

- Maintain full, painless shoulder ROM.
- Strengthen deltoid, rotator cuff and scapular stabilizers.
- Return to functional activities.

EXERCISES:

- Continue all Phase I and II exercises described above.
- Add new exercises as prescribed by your therapist.

THERAPISTS

- May initiate as indicated – progressive theraband, aggressive stretching.

Return to Sports/Activities

Heavy Lifting/Contact Sports

- **4-6 months**- Progress to work hardening, functional activities, sport-specific training, free weights under therapist guidance.
- **6 months** – Full release to overhead work, strenuous sports, contact sports, if released by therapist and physician.