Robert A. Duerr, MD
Complex Knee, Shoulder, & Sports Medicine Surgeon

Post-operative Rehabilitation Protocol

Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair (Small-to-Medium)

General Guidelines

- Supervised physical therapy typically takes place for 4-5 months after surgery
- You will be wearing sling full time for minimum 4 weeks
- Contact therapist or physician for questions or concerns

	Range of Motion	Immobilizer	Exercises
Protection Phase *Weeks 0 - 2*	No Shoulder ROM Elbow/forearm/wrist motion ONLY	Sling w/ abduction pillow at all times, except for hygiene	*Ice:* 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off every hour *Exercises:* Pendulum and grip strengthening
Therapy Phase 1 *Weeks 2 - 4*	Passive ROM only, including FF, ER, and ABD (w/in comfortable range) No AROM/AAROM	Sling w/ abduction pillow at all times, except for hygiene	*Exercises*: Continue pendulums, begin scapular exercises (in sling) including elevation with shrugs, depression, retraction, and protraction. *Modalities*: Per therapist – E-stim, Ultrasound, heat (before), ice (after)
Therapy Phase 2 *Weeks 4 - 8*	Begin AAROM: • Wk 4-5: perform while Supine • Wk 5-6: perform with back elevated 45° • Wk 6+: Upright	Wean out of sling as tolerated	*Exercises*: Progress Phase 1 exercises. Begin cuff isometrics with arm at side at 6 wks *Modalities*: Per therapist – E-stim, Ultrasound, heat (before), ice (after)
Therapy Phase 3 *Weeks 8 - 12*	Progress Active ROM	None	*Exercises*: Progress Phase 1 and 2 exercises. Isometric exercises with pillow or folded towel without moving shoulder. No resistance exercises until 12 wks *Modalities*: Per therapist
Therapy Phase 4 *Weeks 12-16*	Goal: Full painless ROM before progresses to this phase	None	*Exercises*: gentle resistance with elastic bands or hand weights (1-5 lbs) 8-12 reps/2-3 sets per rotator cuff, deltoid, and scapular stabilizers. Only do strengthening 3x/wk to avoid tendonitis *Modalities*: Per therapist
Therapy Phase 5 *Weeks 16+ Return to Sport*	Full Painless ROM	None	*Exercises*: Plyometrics (e.g. weighted ball toss), Sports-related rehab at 4.5 months Return to throwing at 6 months Collision sports at 9 months

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Mercy