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## Rotator Cuff Repair Rehabilitation Protocol

### General

- Ultra-sling external rotation (ER) for six weeks at all times, abduction pillow may be removed after four weeks; for massive cuff repairs sling should be used for six to eight weeks
- Cryotherapy cuff **or** ice used on shoulder every two to three hours for 20 to 30 minutes for first four days then only after physical therapy sessions
- Sleep instructions: Semi-reclined position, small pillow under posterior shoulder to prevent extension
- Start physical therapy on post-op day three or four (for larger tears physical therapy may be held until three to four weeks after surgery)

### Phase I: PROM (Weeks 1 to 6)

#### Weeks 1 to 3

- Passive range of motion (PROM) supine position in scapular plane; avoid extension or adduction
  - PROM in flexion (limit to 90 degrees), internal rotation/external rotation (IR/ER) at 45 degrees of abduction
  - No terminal stretching
  - **No pulleys for four weeks** (eight weeks for massive tears)
- Teach patient passive ER with arm in 30 to 45 degrees of abduction to tolerance; goal of equal ER to non-op arm by end of eight weeks
- Elbow, wrist, hand active range of motion (AROM)
- Grip exercises
- Scapular progression in sidelying position– retraction, protraction, depression in sling
- Cervical stretches/exercises
- Postural exercises

#### Weeks 4 to 6

- PROM: Supine and progress to upright
  - Full supine ER to tolerance with 45 degrees abduction
  - Progress to full supine forward elevation
  - For small tears progress to full IR as tolerated (start posterior capsular stretching {sleeper stretches} and IR behind back; only for small tears)
- Submaximal isometrics: IR/ER, flex/ext and adduction
- Grade 1 and 2 joint mobs

### Phase II: Active Range of Motion (Weeks 7 to 12)

#### Weeks 7 to 9

- Want full PROM by six to eight weeks post-op
- Start active assistive range of motion (AAROM)
  - Start supine and progress to upright
  - For larger tears started at week nine
  - No flexion or abduction lifting greater than two pounds
- Continue scapular stabilization program

## **Weeks 10 to 12**

- Initiate isotonic resistance exercise (low resistance/high reps)
  - Side-lying ER
  - Prone extension
  - Prone horizontal abduction (limit to 45 degrees)
  - Supine IR
  - Flexion to 90 degrees
- Band strengthening started at week eight to nine (week 12 to 13 for larger tears)
- Start posterior capsular stretching (sleeper stretches) and IR behind back
- AAROM to end ranges
- Grade 3 joint mobs for motion assistance
- Goal is full AROM by 12 weeks
- Avoid scapular compensation with range of motion (trap elevation)

## **Phase III: Functional Return (Months 3 to 6)**

- Progressive strengthening: Isotonics
- Continue scapular program
- Lower extremity and trunk/core program
- Discontinue to home maintenance program
- Functional
  - Keep hands in front of you and elbows bent when lifting
  - Minimize repetitive overhead activities
  - Golf: Chip and putt at four months, full at six months
  - Throwing athlete or laborer return to full activities at six months