



Well Beyond.

Craig A. Yager, M.D.

Postoperative Therapy Protocol

Rotator Cuff Repair Standard Protocol

Functional Goals

Phase 1: Immediate Post Surgical Phase

Weeks 0-6: Control swelling and pain, protect anatomic repair

Phase 2: Protection and Protected Active Motion Phase

Weeks 6-8: Restore full passive motion of shoulder and elbow, and initiate active assist motion

Weeks 8-10: Initiate active motion of the shoulder

Weeks 10-12: Restore full active range of motion of the shoulder

Phase 3: Early Strengthening

Weeks 12-14: Initiate strengthening and gradual return of functional activities

Weeks 14-18: Progress to higher level strengthening as tolerated

Phase 4: Advanced Strengthening

Weeks 16-224: Maintain pain-free active motion and return to all functional sporting and work activities

Phase 1: Immediate Post Surgical

Weeks 0-1

Sling should be used at all times, sleep with sling in place

No active motion of the shoulder

Ice 20 minutes per hour for the first 2-3 days, continue as needed afterwards

Gripping exercises as tolerated

Scapular retraction progressing to scapular isometrics

Exercise	Reps/Sets	Frequency	Goal
Pendulums	3 sets of 10 reps	3 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Shoulder ROM
Active Wrist Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	4 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase AROM
Active Hand Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	4 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase AROM
Active Elbow Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase AROM
Active Forearm Supination & Pronation	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase AROM
Active Cervical Spine Motion	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion

Weeks 1-6

Continue sling use at all times, sleep with sling in place, may remove abduction pillow after 3 weeks

No active motion of the shoulder, no passive pulley exercises

Begin passive motion to tolerance starting supine and ensuring pain-free motion

Begin glenohumeral submaximal rhythmic stabilization exercises in supine

Continue ice as needed

Modify above exercises as follows with additional exercises per therapist recommendation:

Exercise	Reps/Sets	Goal	Additional Information
Resisted Isometric Wrist Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion & Strength
Resisted Isometric Hand Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion & Strength
Resisted Isometric Elbow Flexion & Extension	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion & Strength
Resisted Isometric Forearm Supination & Pronation	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion & Strength
Scapular Isometrics, AROM	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Increase Motion & Strength
Sleeper Stretch	3 sets of 15 reps	2 times daily, 7 days/week	Posterior Capsule Stretch

Phase 2 Progression Criteria

Passive forward flexion to at least 125 degrees

Passive ER in scapular plane to minimum of 60 degrees

Passive IR in scapular plane to minimum of 60 degrees

Passive abduction in scapular plane to minimum of 90 degrees

Phase 2: Protection and Protected Active Motion

Weeks 6-8

May remove abduction portion of sling and wean out by end of week 6

Begin gentle rotator cuff submaximal isometrics

Initiate active assist range of motion shoulder flexion from supine position

Continue range of motion exercises as needed with goal of full pain-free passive range of motion by 6 weeks

May use heat prior to range of motion exercises/joint mobilization

May begin passive pulley use

Initiate prone rowing to a neutral arm position

Continue ice as needed post exercise

Weeks 8-10

Discontinue sling by end of week 6

Continue stretching and range of motion exercises as needed

Begin internal rotation stretching, shoulder extension, cross body, and sleeper stretches as needed for posterior capsule

Continue periscapular exercises progressing to manual resistance to all planes

Initiate active range of motion exercises in flexion, scapular plane, abduction, external and internal rotation

Avoid shrug during AROM exercises

If shrug present limit flexion to 90 degrees until shrug resolves

Begin ER and IR with exercise bands with abduction pillow in place under axilla

Weeks 10-12

Continue stretching and range of motion exercises as needed
Initiate limited muscular strengthening program
Begin ER and IR with exercise bands with abduction pillow in place under axilla

Phase 3 Progression Criteria

Full, active range of motion

Phase 3: Early Strengthening

Phase 3 Precautions:

No lifting objects greater than 5 pounds, no sudden lifting or pushing
Exercise should not be painful

Weeks 12-14

Continue stretching, joint mobilization, and passive range of motion exercises as needed
Dynamic strengthening exercises
Initiate strengthening program
Continue exercises as above
Scapular plane elevation to 90°, must be able to elevate without scapular compensation before initiating isotonic exercises.
Prone rowing, prone extension, prone horizontal abduction
No full or empty can exercises

Weeks 14-18

Continue exercises above
Begin light isometrics in 90/90 or higher supine
Initiate light function activities as tolerated
Progress to fundamental exercises (bench press, shoulder press)
Initiate low level plyometrics (2 handed, below chest level – progressing to overhead and finally 1 handed drills)

Phase 4 Progression Criteria

Ability to tolerate progression to low-level functional activities
Demonstrate return of strength/dynamic shoulder stability
Reestablishment of dynamic shoulder stability
Demonstrated adequate strength and dynamic stability for progression to more demanding work and sport-specific activities

Phase 4: Advanced Strengthening Phase

Weeks 18-24

Continue ROM and stretching for ROM maintenance
Continue progressive strengthening
Advanced proprioceptive, neuromuscular activities
Light isotonic strengthening in 90/90 position
Initiation of light sports if satisfactory clinical exam
May initiate interval sports program if appropriate at week 22

Watch carefully for redness, excessive swelling, excessive bleeding, discharge, fever or pain not relieved by medication. Call immediately (913) 232-9846 if any of these are noticed.