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## Traditional Postoperative Rehabilitation Following Open and Mini-Open Rotator Cuff Repair

### I. PHASE I – IMMEDIATE POST-SURGICAL PHASE (Week 1-2)

Goals: Maintain integrity of the repair.  
Gradually increase passive range of motion.  
Diminish pain and inflammation.

#### Week 1:

- Abduction brace in 30 degrees abduction (sleep in brace)
- Pendulum exercises
- Passive ROM
  - Flexion to at least 105 degrees
  - ER/IR in scapular plane (gentle ROM) ER 35 degrees, IR 35 degrees
- Elbow/Hand gripping and ROM exercises
- Cryotherapy for pain and inflammation
  - Ice 15-20 minutes every hour

#### Week 2:

- Continue use of brace
- Pendulum exercises (flexion, circles, etc.)
- Progress passive ROM to tolerance
  - Flexion to at least 145 degrees
  - ER in scapular plane to 45 degrees
  - IR in scapular plane to 45 degrees
- Continue elbow/hand ROM and gripping exercises
- Continue use of ice for pain control
  - Use ice at least 6-7 times daily
- Sleeping
  - Continue sleeping in brace

#### Precautions:

1. Maintain arm in brace, remove only for exercise
2. No lifting of objects
3. No excessive shoulder extension
4. No excessive or aggressive stretching or sudden movements
5. No supporting of body weight by hands
6. Keep incision clean and dry

### II. PHASE II – PROTECTION PHASE (Weeks 3-8)

Goals: Allow healing of soft tissue. Do not overstress healing tissue.  
Gradually restore full passive ROM (week 4-5). Re-establish dynamic shoulder stability. Decrease pain and inflammation.

#### Week 3:

- Continue use of brace
- Passive range of motion to tolerance
  - Flexion to approximately 145-160 degrees

- ER at 90 degrees abduction to at least 45 degrees
- IR at 90 degrees abduction to at least 45 degrees

**Weeks 4-5:**

- Progress passive ROM till approximately full ROM at weeks 4-5
- Begin AAROM
- Flexion to tolerance
- ER/IR at 90 degrees abduction in scapular plane to tolerance
- Begin submaximal isometrics
  - Flexion with bent elbow
  - Extension with bent elbow
  - Abduction with bent elbow
  - ER/IR in scapular plane
  - Elbow flexion
- Dynamic stabilization drills
  - ER/IR in the scapular plane
  - Flexion/extension RS – at 100 degrees flexion, 10 degrees horizontal abduction
- Continue use of ice as needed
- May use heat prior to ROM exercises
- May use pool for light AROM exercises
- Discontinue use of brace at end of week 4-5 based on size of tear and physician discretion

**Weeks 6-8:**

- May use heat prior to exercises
- Continue AAROM and stretching exercises
- Continue isometric exercises
- Progress rhythmic stabilization
  - ER/IR scapular plane
  - Flexion/extension
- Initiate ER/IR tubing at 0 degrees

**Precautions:**

1. No lifting
2. No excessive behind the back movements
3. No supporting of body weight by hands and arms
4. No sudden jerking motions

**III. PHASE III – INTERMEDIATE PHASE (Weeks 8-15)**

Goals: Full active ROM (weeks 14-16).  
Maintain full passive ROM.  
Dynamic shoulder stability.  
Gradual restoration of shoulder strength and power.  
Gradual return to functional activities.

**Weeks 8-12:**

- Continue stretching and PROM (as needed to maintain full ROM)
- Continue ER/IR tubing at 0 degrees
- Continue dynamic stabilization drills
- Initiate active ROM (unweighted)
  - Standing scaption with ER to 90 degrees
  - Standing abduction to 90 degrees

- Sidelying ER
- Prone row
- Elbow flexion/extension
- Wall stabilization drills

*\*\*Patient must be able to elevate arm without shoulder or scapular hiking before initiating AROM; if unable, continue dynamic stabilization exercises.*

**Week 12:**

- Progress strengthening program
- ER/IR tubing
- ER sidelying
- Lateral raises
- Full can in scapular plane
- Prone rowing
- Prone horizontal abduction
- Elbow flexion
- Elbow extension
- Increase weight one pound every 10-14 days

**Week 14:**

- Continue all exercise listed above
- Progress to fundamental shoulder exercises

**IV. PHASE IV – ADVANCED STRENGTHENING PHASE (Weeks 16-22)**

Goals: Maintain full non-painful ROM.  
Enhance functional use of UE.  
Improve muscular strength and power.  
Gradual return to functional activities.

**Week 16:**

- Continue ROM and stretching to maintain full ROM
- Self capsular stretches
- Progress shoulder strengthening exercises
  - Fundamental shoulder exercises

**Week 20:**

- Continue all exercises listed above.
- Continue to perform ROM stretching, if motion is not complete

**V. PHASE V – RETURN TO ACTIVITY PHASE (Weeks 23-20)**

Goals: Gradual return to strenuous work activities.  
Gradual return to recreational sport activities.

**Week 23:**

- Continue fundamental shoulder exercise program (at least 4 times weekly)
- Continue stretching, if motion is tight

**Week 26:**

- May initiate interval sport program (i.e., golf, etc.)