

## **Rehabilitation Protocol: Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair Partial to Small Tears**

### **Phase I - Immediate Post-Surgical Phase (Days 1-14)**

Sling immobilization with supporting abduction pillow to be worn at all times except for showering

#### Goals:

Maintain Integrity of the Repair  
Gradually Increase Passive Range of Motion  
Diminish Pain and Inflammation  
Prevent Muscular Inhibition

#### Precautions:

1. No Lifting of Objects
2. No Excessive Shoulder Extension
3. No Excessive Stretching or Sudden Movements
4. No Supporting of Body Weight by Hands
5. Keep Incision Clean & Dry

### **Phase II (Weeks 2-6)**

Discontinue sling immobilization

#### 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 & Inflammation

Range of Motion – True Passive Range of Motion Only to Patient Tolerance (weeks 2-4)

- o Goals: 140° Forward Flexion, 40° External Rotation\* with elbow at side, 60-80° Abduction without rotation, Limit Internal Rotation to 40° with the shoulder in the 60-80° abducted position
- o Maintain elbow at or anterior to mid-axillary line when patient is supine
- o **4-6 weeks:** Begin AAROM → AROM as tolerated

#### Therapeutic Exercise –

- o Codman Exercises/Pendulums
  - o Elbow/Wrist/Hand Range of Motion and Grip Strengthening
  - o Isometric Scapular Stabilization
  - o **4-6 weeks:** Being gentle AAROM exercises (supine position), gentle joint mobilizations (grades I and II), continue with Phase I exercises
  - o Start Canes or pulleys at 4 weeks
- Heat/Ice before and after PT sessions

#### Precautions:

1. No Heavy Lifting of Objects
2. No excessive behind the back movements
3. No Supporting of Body Weight by Hands & Arms
4. No Sudden Jerking Motions

### **Phase III (Weeks 6-12)**

Goal:

Full active motion by 8 weeks  
Maintain Full Passive ROM  
Dynamic Shoulder Stability  
Gradual Restoration of Shoulder Strength  
Gradual Return to Functional Activities

Range of Motion –

- Progress to full AROM without discomfort

Therapeutic Exercise

- Continue with scapular strengthening
- Continue and progress with Phase II exercises
- Begin Internal/External Rotation Isometrics
- Stretch posterior capsule when arm is warmed-up
- **8 weeks:** Progress to active exercises with resistance, shoulder flexion with trunk flexed to 45° in upright position, begin deltoid and biceps strengthening\*\*

Modalities per PT discretion

### **Phase IV (Weeks 12-24)**

Range of Motion – Full without discomfort

Therapeutic Exercise –

- Advance strengthening as tolerated: isometrics → therabands → light weights (1-5 lbs),
- 8-12 repetitions/2-3 sets for Rotator Cuff, Deltoid and Scapular Stabilizers
- Return to sports at 6 months if approved

Modalities per PT discretion

### **Comments:**

**\* IF SUBSCAPULARIS REPAIR WAS PERFORMED – NO EXTERNAL ROTATION UNTIL 6 WEEKS POST-OP**

**\*\* IF BICEPS TENODESIS WAS PERFORMED - NO BICEPS STRENGTHENING UNTIL 10 WEEKS POST-OP**