



Rotator Cuff Repair: Patch, Bridge, Massive Tear

Phase 0 – Immediate Post-Surgical (Week 0-6)

**Abduction Sling for 6 weeks

**No concentric or eccentric rotator cuff strengthening for 16 weeks

Goals:

- Maintain integrity of repair
- Diminish pain and inflammation
- Avoid adjacent joint stiffness (elbow, wrist, hand, cervical spine)

Precautions:

- No active range of motion (AROM) of the shoulder
- No passive range of motion (PROM) of the shoulder
- Strict use of shoulder immobilizer for 6 weeks, sleep in immobilizer
- Maintain arm in shoulder immobilizer, remove only for bathing
- No supporting of body weight by hands
- No lifting of objects

Week 0-6

- Cryotherapy for pain and inflammation
- Begin hand, wrist, elbow AROM & PROM as tolerated
- Begin cervical AROM & PROM as tolerated

Phase I – Protection (Week 7-10)

Goals:

- Maintain integrity of repair
- Diminish pain and inflammation
- Prevent muscular inhibition
- Allow healing of soft tissue
- Do not overstress healing rotator cuff and superior capsule
- Independent with ADLs with modifications while maintaining the integrity of the repair

Precautions

- Strict use of shoulder immobilizer for 6 weeks, sleep in immobilizer
- Maintain arm in external rotation immobilizer, remove only for bathing
- No supporting of body weight by hands
- No lifting of objects

Criteria for progression to Phase II:

- Passive range of motion (PROM) flexion to at least 100 degrees
- PROM ER in scapular plane to at least 45 degrees
- PROM IR in scapular plane to at least 45 degrees
- PROM ABduction to at least 90 degrees in scapular plane

Week 7-8

- Progressively wean off shoulder immobilizer/sling



- Patient education: posture, joint protection, positioning, hygiene
- Initiate pendulum exercises
- Start scapular musculature isometrics

Week 9-10

- Begin scapular musculature isometrics and cervical ROM
- Patient education: posture, joint protection, positioning, hygiene
- Start PROM to tolerance
 - Flexion
 - Abduction in the scapular plane
 - ER in scapular plane
 - IR in scapular plane

Phase II – Motion Phase (Week 11-16)

Goals:

- Allow healing of soft tissue
- Do not overstress healing rotator cuff
- Gradually restore full passive ROM

Precautions:

- No lifting
- No supporting of body weight by hands and arms
- No excessive behind the back movements
- No sudden jerking motions

Criteria for progression to Phase III

- Full AROM
- Full PROM

Week 11-12

- Initiate active assisted range of motion (AAROM) flexion in supine position
- Progressive PROM until full ROM; this ROM should be pain free
- Gentle scapular/glenohumeral joint mobilization as indicated to regain full passive ROM
- Pendulum exercises
- Continue scapular musculature isometrics and cervical ROM
- Initiate prone rowing to neutral arm position
- May use heat prior to ROM exercises
- May use pool (aquatherapy) for light ROM exercises
- Ice after exercise

Week 13-16

- Continue AAROM and stretching exercises
- Begin rotator cuff isometrics
- Initiate AROM exercises
 - Shoulder flexion in scapular plane
 - Shoulder abduction



Phase III – Intermediate Phase (Week 17-24)

Goals:

- Full AROM
- Maintain full PROM
- Dynamic shoulder stability
- Gradual restoration of shoulder strength, power and endurance
- Optimize neuromuscular control
- Gradual return to functional activities

Precautions:

- No heavy lifting (<5 lbs)
- No sudden lifting or pushing activities
- No sudden jerking motions

Criteria for progression to Phase IV

- Able to tolerate the progression to low-level functional activities
- Demonstrates return of strength/dynamic stability
- Re-establish dynamic shoulder stability
- Demonstrate adequate strength and dynamic stability for progress to higher demanding working/sport specific activities

Week 17-19

- Dynamic stabilization exercises
- Initiate strengthening program
 - External rotation (ER) and Internal rotation (IR) with theraband
 - ER side-lying
 - Lateral raises
 - Full can in scapular plane (avoid empty can abduction exercises)
 - Prone rowing
 - Prone horizontal abduction
 - Prone extension
 - Elbow flexion/extension

Week 20

- Initiate light functional activities

Week 21-24

- Progress to fundamental shoulder exercises

Phase IV – Advanced Strengthening (Week 25-30)

Goals:

- Maintain full non-painful AROM
- Advance conditioning exercises for enhanced function use of the extremity
- Improve muscular strength, power and endurance
- Gradual return to full functional activities

Week 25-30

- Continue ROM and self-guided capsular stretching



- Continue progression of strengthening
- Advance proprioceptive, neuromuscular activities

Phase V – Return to Full Activity

Goals:

- Gradual return to strenuous work activities
- Gradual return to recreational activities
- Gradual return to sport activities

Week 31

- Can begin golf, tennis, ect.
- May initiate interval sports program (if applicable)

Criteria to Return to Sport

- Surgeon clearance
- Pain free shoulder function
- Adequate active and passive range of motion necessary for required sport/activity