

Post-op rehabilitation program for moderate (2-3cm) rotator cuff repair

Problem: rotator cuff tear with reduced range of movement, strength and shoulder pain

Aim: to increase range of movement, strength and reduce pain

Forbidden:

- Must avoid lifting elbow from side for 3 weeks
- Do not stretch for 6 weeks
- No lifting above shoulder height or lifting with a straight arm for 6 weeks

Expectations:

- Return to sedentary jobs as pain allows
- Return to manual jobs may take 3-6 months
- Driving after 8 weeks (if pain and function allows safe driving).
- Breaststroke swimming, jogging and cycling from 12 weeks
- Contact, racquet sports and freestyle swimming from 6 months

Physiotherapy protocol day 1 onwards:

- Wear sling for 3 weeks and then wean out as pain allows
- Ensure adequate pain relief, neurovascular status normal and no signs of infection
- Pendulums in forward lean standing
- Shoulder shrugs
- Elbow and wrist exercises

Physiotherapy protocol day 21 onwards:

- Active assisted forward elevation in forward lean standing, prone and supine
- Isometric cuff exercises, progress to active as pain and control allows
- Active assisted external rotation to neutral

Physiotherapy protocol day 28 onwards:

- Scapular setting in neutral
- Active assisted internal and external rotation progressing to active

Physiotherapy protocol 6 weeks onwards:

- Progress to active strengthening as pain and control allows, initially in forward lean
- NB superior migration of head is a sign of poor control
- Gradually build up active external rotation and abduction
- Begin gentle strengthening in available range
- Check scapular control throughout range.
- Add proprioception exercises when control good
- Closed chain exercises

Physiotherapy protocol 12 weeks onwards:

- Full range of movement
- Progress strengthening into range
- Continue to increase proprioceptive work