

Post-op rehabilitation program for small (less than 2cm) 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
- No lifting above shoulder height or lifting with a straight arm for 6 weeks

Expectations:

- driving at 6 weeks (if pain and function allows safe driving)
- breaststroke swimming at 10 weeks
- freestyle swimming and non-contact sports from 3 months
- contact sports and racquet sports from 6 months

Physiotherapy protocol day 1 onwards:

- Ensure adequate pain relief, neurovascular status normal and no signs of infection
- Hand and elbows exercises
- Pendulums and circles
- Active external rotation and internal rotation
- Elbow and wrist exercises
- Sling when not performing exercises for 3 weeks

Physiotherapy protocol day 21 onwards:

- Begin to wean out of sling over next 3 weeks
- Progress exercises in forward lean standing, prone and supine
- Isometric cuff exercises, progress to active as pain and control allows
- Active assisted flexion within 50% of normal range of movement
- Light ADL by 6 weeks at waist level

Physiotherapy protocol week 6 onwards:

- Progress to active strengthening as pain and control allows
- NB superior migration of head is a sign of poor control
- Close chain exercises
- Manual techniques to regain full ROM (do not force into pain or resistance)