



Rotator Cuff Repair (Large/Massive)

Postoperative Protocol

PHASE I: Protected ROM (6 weeks)

- May remove dressing and shower postop day # 3.
- Cover incisions with tape and gauze – sutures will be removed at 2-week visit.
- Ice or cold flow systems encouraged for the first week at a minimum and should be used 3-4 times per day.
- Your sling should always be in place when not performing exercises.
- Begin pendulum exercises 4 weeks following surgery
- Avoid all active and active assistive exercises until cleared by the surgeon. This includes pulley exercises, wand and supine assisted exercises.
- Initiate exercise program 3 times per day:
 - Immediate elbow, forearm and hand range of motion out of sling
 - Passive external rotation of the shoulder to tolerance - instruct family member (start at 2 weeks)
 - PROM into scapular plane elevation to 120 degrees (start at 2 weeks)

PHASE II: Progressive ROM (6 to 12 weeks)

- May discontinue sling.
- Lifting restriction of 5 pounds should be reinforced with patient.
- May start active scapular mobility exercises – must keep the shoulder musculature relaxed.
- Start AAROM and AROM – includes pulleys, wand and supine gravity assisted exercises. Emphasize all motions except IR behind the back until 3 months.
- Isolate and strengthen scapular stabilizers.
- Progress PROM and capsular stretching of the shoulder as needed – elevation and external rotation as tolerated
- Avoid resisted training or strengthening. Avoid AROM in positions of subacromial impingement.

PHASE III: (>12 weeks)

- Discontinue formal lifting restrictions.
- Start progressive rotator cuff and shoulder strengthening at 3 months – isometrics initially
- Initiate isotonic strengthening at 4 months (Theraband, dumbbells, Hughston's exercises, etc). Include home cuff strengthening program. Continue to emphasize scapular stabilizers.
- Equate active and passive range of motion. Encourage scapulohumeral mechanics during active shoulder motion.
- Simulate work/recreational activities as rotator cuff strength and endurance improve. No return to full high-impact activities until 6 months postoperatively.