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**SHOULDER REHABILITATION PROTOCOL**  
*ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR WITH  
ANTERIOR STABILIZATION*

**GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- The local anesthetic (similar to novacaine) in your shoulder will last 6-12 hours
  - Start taking the pain medication as soon as you start feeling pain
- Use cryotherapy continuously for the first 72 hours, then as-needed thereafter
  - Ensure that the cryotherapy cuff never contacts the skin directly
  - Apply to the shoulder after performing rehab exercises for the first 12 weeks
- Remove the bandage 48 hours after surgery, but leave the white steristrips on the skin
  - Apply fresh gauze pad or bandaid to any incision that is moist or weeping
- Keep the incisions/steristrips dry
  - You may get the incision wet after the first postoperative visit
  - Do NOT submerge the shoulder underwater for the first 6 weeks
- The sling is for comfort and to protect the repair.
  - Wear the sling for the first 6 weeks, removing it for exercises and showers
  - Wear the sling when out of the house for the first 8 weeks
- Protect the shoulder while getting dressed, keeping the arm close to your side
  - choose loose, comfortable clothing that is easy to put on and take off
  - the operative arm should go in first when putting on a shirt, and should come out last when taking off a shirt.

Follow up in one week, 410-448-6400

**PHASE I**

Begins immediately post-op through the first postoperative visit (2 weeks)

**Goals:**

- Protect the shoulder and minimize inflammation
- Ensure skin healing

**Sling:**

- Wear the sling full-time
- May type or write in the sling.
- No holding or carrying anything heavier than a pen/pencil

**Therapeutic Exercises (remove sling to perform 2 times per day):**

- *Pendulums.* Start the day after surgery. Bend over at the waist, let the elbow straighten, and let the arm gently sway. Use your body to generate momentum for the arm to sway rather than using the muscles of the operated shoulder/arm. This is the safest position to wash under the armpit.

- *External rotation stretching.* Use the uninvolved arm to passively rotate the hand/arm on the surgical side to the outside (away from the belly) with a limit of 30 degrees (0 degrees is the hand pointed directly in front).

## **PHASE II**

Begins 2 weeks postoperatively and extends to 6 weeks postoperatively

### **Goals:**

- Protect the shoulder and the repair
- Regain range of motion

### **Sling:**

- Wear the sling full-time, removing only for shower and exercises
- May type or write in the sling.
- No holding/carrying anything heavier than a pen/pencil

### **Therapeutic Exercises (3 times per day):**

- *External rotation stretching*, limit to 50 degrees to 4 weeks, 70 degrees to 6 weeks
- *Supine passive forward elevation stretching* in the scapular plane
- *Scapular retractions*

## **PHASE III**

Begins 6 weeks postoperatively and extends to 12 weeks postoperatively

### **Goals:**

- Protect the repair
- Improve range of motion
- Initiate active range of motion while minimizing inflammation

### **Sling:**

- Discontinue the sling at home after 8 weeks
- Wear the sling outside of the home for the first 10 weeks

### **Activities:**

- No lifting or carrying anything heavier than a cup of coffee or can of soda
- No reaching away from your body without assistance from the other arm

### **Therapeutic Exercises (3 times per day):**

- All exercises from Phase II daily, no limit in external rotation stretching
- *Behind-the-back internal rotation*
- *Supported active shoulder rotation*
- *Supine cross-body stretch*
- *Hands-behind-head stretch*
- *Abduction, flexion, and extension stretching*
- *Wall-climb and/or pulley assisted elevation in scapular plane*, start at 8 weeks
- *Active prone motion (forward, scapular-plane, abduction, extension)* start at 8 weeks

- NO weights, resistance, or theraband strengthening

#### **PHASE IV**

Begins 12 weeks postoperatively until 18 weeks postoperatively

##### **Criteria for advancement to Phase IV:**

- Full, painless range of motion

##### **Activities:**

- No holding or carrying anything heavier than 5 pounds
- No lifting anything heavier than 1 pound away from your body

##### **Goals:**

- Initiate early functional strengthening
- Protect the repair

##### **Therapeutic Exercises (stretching every day, strengthening every other day):**

- All exercises from Phase III
- Active motion and stretching in all planes
- *Theraband* internal and external rotation in shoulder adduction (arm at the side)

#### **PHASE V**

Begins 18 weeks postoperatively

##### **Goals:**

- Maximize functional strength

##### **Therapeutic Exercises:**

- All exercises from Phase III
- Theraband in all planes and progressive dynamic strengthening

#### **RETURN TO SPORT**

Requires clearance from physician

Sport training/practice once shoulder at 90% of uninvolved side

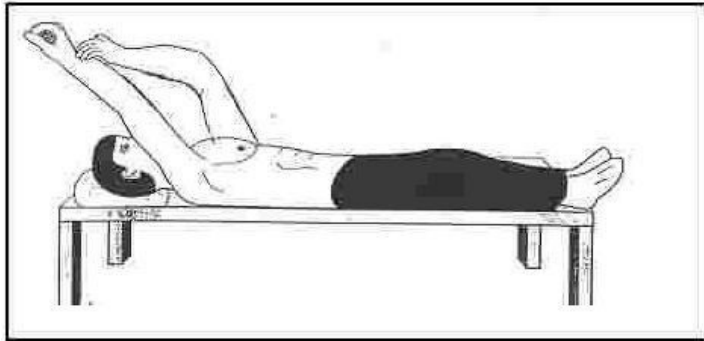
- Start with 'walk-through' at < 1% of maximum effort
- Increase 10% effort each session as tolerated

Goal of return to full participation in all activities at 9-12 months

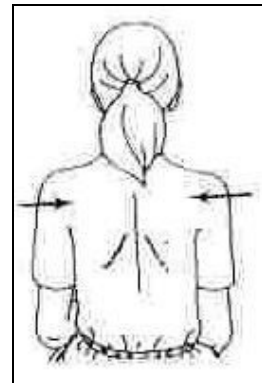
**Selected Exercise Diagrams (Phase 1 and 2)**



*External rotation stretching*

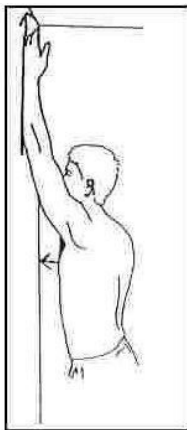


*Supine active-assisted forward elevation stretching*



*Scapular retractions*

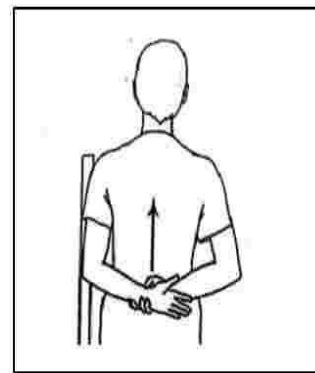
**Selected Exercise Diagrams (Phase 3)**



*Wall climb*

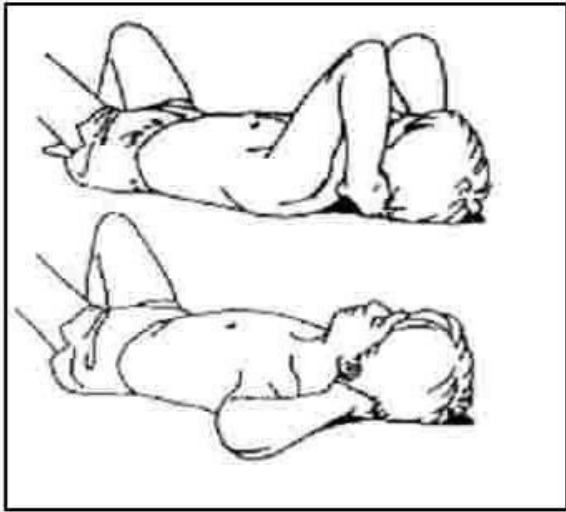


*Supported active shoulder rotation*



*Behind-the-back stretching*

**Selected Exercise Diagrams (Phase 3)**

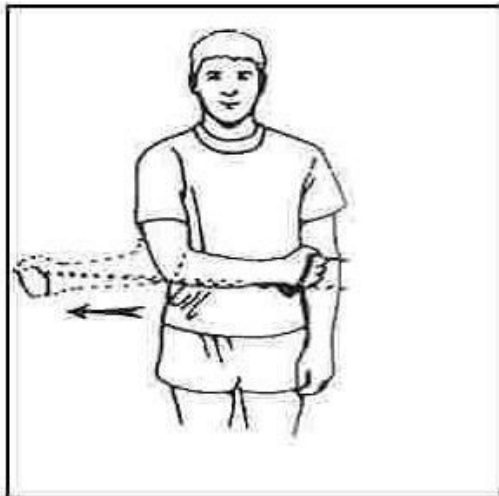


*Hands-behind-head stretch  
External rotation stretching in abduction/elevation*

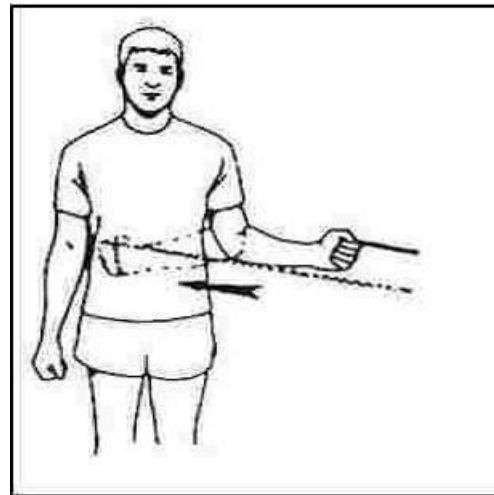


*Cross-body stretching*

**Selected Exercise Diagrams (Phase 4)**



*Theraband external rotation*



*Theraband internal rotation*