

Rotator Cuff: Large Tear Protocol

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PHASE I

Time frame: 0-6 weeks post-op

Type of motion allowed: Passive Range of Motion (PROM)

- Glenohumeral ER: work toward full ER (position in 15°–20° ABD). Focus on glenohumeral motion and not just gross shoulder motion. If there is a subscapularis repair, check with MD about ER restrictions.
- Glenohumeral ABD 0°–90°.
- After GH ABD reaches 60°–70°, it is OK to work on ER as tolerated at 45° ABD. If there is a subscapularis repair, check with MD about ER restrictions.
- Gross shoulder Elevation (scaption) 0°–140°. No sagittal plane flexion stretch. No IR stretch.
- Pendulums/Codman's.
- Sling full-time except when sitting still such as watching TV or reading. Arm control by gravity only for shower.
- OK to use hand cautiously for functional tasks such as typing (arm in sling).
- Postural work, upper trapezius relaxation, active scapular retraction and depression.
- Encourage a walking program, stationary bike, etc for cardio and fighting “the blues.”
- Wrist/elbow ROM

PHASE II

Time frame: 6-10 weeks post-op

Type of motion allowed: Active Assisted Range of Motion (AAROM), Active Range of Motion (AROM)

- Assistance with opposite hand is considered active assisted.
- Glenohumeral ER: work toward full ER (OK to position between 0°–60° ABD). If there is a subscapularis repair, check with MD about ER restrictions.
- Gross shoulder Elevation (scaption) 0°–full.
- Begin active assisted elevation supine. When at least 150°, progress to upright active assisted elevation and supine active elevation. When supine active elevation is at least 150°, progress to upright **active** elevation.
- No sling needed. May use it for safety.
- OK to drive an automatic vehicle, patient must evaluate their own safety to do so.
- Aquatic therapy AAROM-AROM.
- Isometrics when patient has active elevation of at least 150° (No pure ABD isometrics).

Goals at 8 weeks: Full ER and scaption, functional use of arm at side, minimal pain, good posture.

PHASE III

Time frame: 10+ weeks post-op

Type of motion allowed: Resistance

- OK to begin pure flexion and ABD stretches, IR stretch, and ER stretch in full ABD.
- Isometrics
- Begin gentle isotonic exercises
- Closed chain exercises such as wall pushups.
- OK to drive a stick shift with the involved arm.
- OK to run.

PHASE IV

Time frame: 4+ months post-op

Type of motion allowed: Return to lower-demand sports

- Golf (trailing arm may be ready to return before lead arm), fly fishing.

PHASE V

Time frame: 6+ months post-op

Type of motion allowed: Return to sport

- Throwing, racquet sports, boating, skiing.
- Return to weightlifting.



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