

Modified Rehabilitation Program After Rotator Cuff Repair

Robert E. FitzGibbons, M.D.

1. Immediate postoperative period

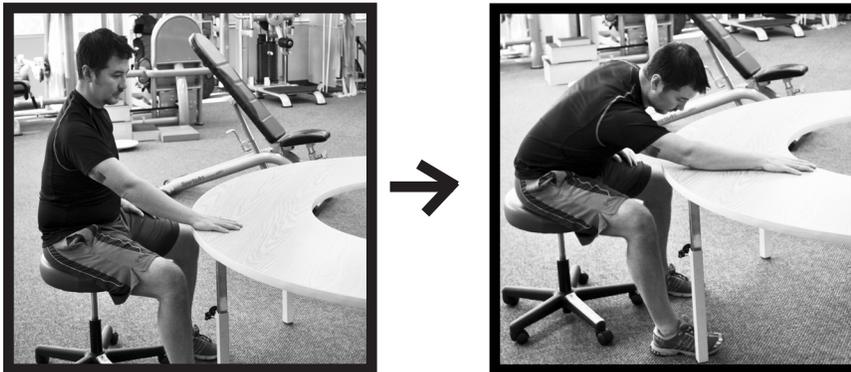
Your extremity will be placed in a sling +/- a small pillow. This sling may be carefully removed on postoperative day #3 to take a shower. Saran wrap or press seal plastic wrap should be used to try and protect the incisions and keep them dry. The operative extremity should hang at side of your body and you will lean forward carefully to allow the arm to distract from your body so you can clean under the arm and in the axilla. Upon completing the shower or bath, you can dry the shoulder/arm/axilla region and allow to air dry and then carefully “worm” a shirt on the operative extremity and place the other arm in the other sleeve of the shirt and the sling/pillow can then be placed on the outside of the shirt.

You may remove your sling/pillow two times a day to flex and extend the elbow/hand/wrist up and down only. There should be no rotation away from the body. In some instances, if a biceps tendon repair was carried out at the time of rotator cuff repair surgery, you will be instructed not to do this exercise.

2. Post-op weeks three to six

Date to begin:

a) Table slides for passive motion can be carried out sitting at a kitchen table and sliding the operative hand out on the table approx. five times slowly and carefully. A magazine/newspaper under the hand may provide a smooth, slippery surface. You should slide the hand forward maintaining contact with the table while the head and chest advance towards the table. You are not actively using your shoulder for this motion. You should spend approx. 5 minutes carefully doing this exercise 1-2 times a day.



b) Pendulum exercises are done by leaning forward so that your operative extremity is hanging free. You can do gentle motion, side to side, or small circular motions both in a counter-clockwise and a clockwise direction. This should be done twice a day, spending approx. 1-2 minutes doing each exercise.

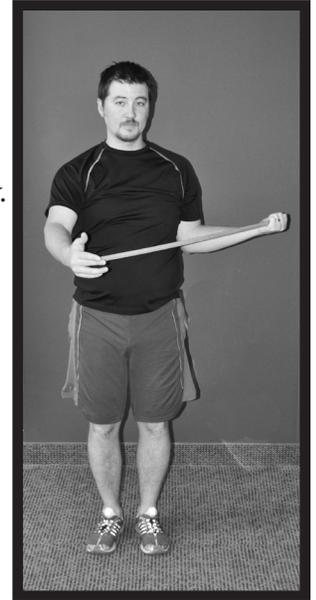


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Continued

c) Can/Stick exercises for external rotation – you can passively externally rotate your surgical shoulder and arm to the plane of your body. You will use your non-operative arm as the motor, but do not bring your surgical arm past the plane of your body.



3. Postoperative weeks seven through ten

a) Discontinue your sling six weeks from the date of surgery. You may then begin to use the operative shoulder for activities of daily living and I want you to start using the shoulder for simple things such as getting a cup from a shelf, opening a door, carrying some groceries, or driving.

You can continue table slides as well as the external rotation stick exercises and these may be advanced past the plane of your body at this time.

I would like you to add internal rotation stretches behind your back. This can be done with a towel or a stick and work at slowly increasing the ability to put your hand at the base of your spine and then slowly bringing your hand up towards your head.

Activity from the waist level down should be relatively safe. You want to avoid any lifting of over five pounds in an overhead position. Avoid sudden movement/acceleration of the surgical arm.

