

Acromioclavicular Joint Sprain/Separation Non-operative Protocol

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General Notes:

- Often 6 – 12 week rehab
- Overhead athletes should complete interval throwing programs prior to full participation
- Depending on various factors, it may be necessary to limit contact sports for at least one month
- About 10 – 20% of patients can have some “clicking” in the shoulder after rehab
- Approximately 50% of patients may have occasional symptoms
- Total time in sling may vary from 1 week in lower grade injuries to up to 4 weeks in higher grade injuries.

	Weight-bearing	Splint/Brace	ROM	Modalities	Exercise
Phase I Initial Treatment and Pain Management Phase	Limit 0 – 5lbs. Should not cause pain.	Sling at all times for comfort. Once able to take arm out of sling with minimal symptoms, progress to Phase II This may take as long as 1 – 4 weeks.	Starting at least by 2 weeks after injury. Start with AAROM/PROM avoiding cross body and internal rotation. After starting ROM, if patient is particularly symptomatic avoid > 90 deg elevation.	Ice/cryo As needed NSAIDs	If not painful or minimally symptomatic, patient can begin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scapular isometrics - Rotator cuff isometrics - Core, lower extremity exercise
Phase II Start once no pain out of sling with arm at side Goal: Restore painfree ROM	Slowly advance weight through extremity as symptoms allow.	Wean out of sling.	Progress ROM as tolerated. Avoid crossbody adduction Avoid reaching arm behind back	As per Phase I. No deep and friction type massage and soft tissue mobilization.	Advance exercises noted in Phase I Progress as tolerated. Avoid press type of exercises (ex. bench, military press)
Phase III Start phase III once full ROM Goal: Restore strength	WBAT	None	Normalize ROM as tolerated. Avoid crossbody adduction	As Phase I and II.	Progress strengthening as tolerated Ok to resume pressing exercises
Phase IV Goal: Return back to sport specific training	WBAT	None	Full	As in Phase III	Advance exercise as tolerated. Incorporate sport specific drills.
Phase V (For overhead athletes) Goal: Complete throwing programs	WBAT	None	Full	As above	Begin interval throwing program for pitchers, quarterbacks, javelin, and other overhead athletes

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Additional Notes:

- ATC's and appropriate personnel can add AC joint pad as needed depending on sport.

Adapted from:

- 1) Mazzocca, A. (2019). Mechanics, Pathomechanics and Injury in the Overhead Athlete (WB Kibler, AD Sciascia, Eds.). Springer
- 2) Cote et al Clin Sports Med 2010
- 3) Romeo, A. (2010). Injuries to the Acromioclavicular Joint in Adults and Children (JC DeLee, D Drez, MD Miller, Eds.). Saunders Elsevier
- 4) Frank et al J Am Acad Orthop Surg 2019