

Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair
Delayed Postoperative Rehabilitation Protocol
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General Notes:

- Sling used for 6 weeks total
 - o Removed only for showers and, when comfortable, meals
 - o Instructions for self care and sling removal can be found on drjeffreywitty.com
- Patients should perform home stretching at least 3 times a day
- Some of these protocols may be slower than others the therapist may have used previously. The below protocols are designed to maximize tissue healing and have been shown to have low rates of long term stiffness to the shoulder. The main goal is for the tendon to heal. Any stiffness that develops can be addressed with therapy with low rates of stiffness long term.
- **If a biceps tenodesis has been performed:**
 - o POW 0 – 4 elbow PROM only
 - o POW 4 – 6 begin gentle AROM
 - o POW 6 and beyond, begin gentle progressive strengthening
- **If a subscapularis tear has also been performed:**
 - o POW 0 – 6, external rotation PROM to neutral only
 - o POW 6 – 12, progress external/internal rotation AAROM/AROM/PROM as tolerated
 - o POW 12 and beyond, begin progressive resistance
- **NO pendulums or traction used throughout protocol**
- Use ice as much as possible 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off especially after exercise.
- No anti-inflammatory medication (aleve, motrin, advil etc) for 6 weeks from day of surgery.
- ER at the side can be accomplished with a pole or stick

	Weightbearing	Sling	ROM	Exercise
Phase I Week 0 - 6	NWB	All times except shower and can remove during meals if comfortable	<u>Elbow:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PROM only if biceps tenodesis - POW4 start AROM - AROM immediately with arm at side if no biceps tenodesis <u>Shoulder:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No motion 	No Pendulums Isometric scapular retraction. Can be done in sling. Ball squeezes throughout day
Phase II Week 6 - 10	NWB	As above	<u>Elbow:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gentle AROM of elbow at side <u>Shoulder: PROM ONLY</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External rotation: Progress PROM ER 	Continue Phase I <u>Shoulder:</u> No strengthening <u>Elbow:</u> Can start elbow

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			<p>at the side as tolerated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scaption: POW6-8 SUPINE PROM - Scaption: POW 8 – 10 PROM can be performed out of supine position 	<p>strengthening POW8</p>
<p>Phase III Week 10 - 12</p>	<p>Limit to carry less than 5lbs with arm at side.</p>	<p>No sling</p>	<p><u>Elbow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AROM <p><u>Shoulder:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress AAROM and AROM as motion normalizes 	<p>Continue Phase II</p> <p><u>Elbow:</u> No strengthening</p> <p><u>Shoulder:</u> No strengthening</p>
<p>Phase IV POW 12 - 16</p>	<p>Increase as comfort allows at the side</p>	<p>No sling</p>	<p>Continue Phase III.</p> <p><u>Elbow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gentle AROM of elbow at side <p><u>Shoulder:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress PROM as tolerated - AAROM and progress to AROM as motion improves <p>Add doorway stretches. Pec major/minor stretch</p>	<p><u>Shoulder:</u> Add progressive resistance</p> <p>Wall washes</p> <p>Resisted IR/ER</p> <p>Scapular control: Kibler scapular rehab exercises - low row - lawnmower -inferior glides</p> <p>Restore core, trunk, shoulder kinetic chain</p> <p>No exercise with rapid acceleration</p>
<p>Phase V Week 16 - 24</p>	<p>Continue Phase IV</p>	<p>No sling</p>	<p><u>Elbow:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AROM <p><u>Shoulder:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normalize motion - PROM - AAROM/AROM 	<p>Continue Phase IV</p> <p>Return to gym. Avoid exercise /activities with rapid</p>

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			Doorway stretches. Pec major/minor stretch	acceleration and high impact
Phase VI Week 24 and beyond	Continue Phase V	No sling	Continue Phase V	Return to full activities/sports. Work with position coach etc to optimize kinetic for return to competitive play.

Kibler Scapula Exercises:

- starts POW12
- [Knee Surg Sports Traumatol Arthrosc \(2016\) 24:390–397](#)

Adapted from:

- Arndt et al Orthop Traumatol Surg Res 2012
- Kim et al AJSM 2012
- Cuff et al JSES 2012
- Ma et al Arthroscopy 2012
- Keener et al JBJS 2014
- Koh et al JBJS 2014
- Lee et al Arthroscopy 2012
- Chang et al AJSM 2014
- Kluczynski et al AJSM 2015
- Kibler et al Knee Surg Sports Traumatol Arthrosc 2016