

REHABILITATION PROTOCOL FOR DISTAL BICEPS TENDON REPAIR

APPOINTMENTS:

- Clinic appointments at 8 to 12 days, then at 6 weeks, 12 weeks, 18 weeks and possibly 24 weeks
- Physical therapy appointment starting at 3 weeks

ACUTE PHASE: surgery to 2 weeks post-op

- Immobilize the elbow in the splint at all times
- Range of motion exercises for the hand
- Ice as needed
- Work restrictions: off work for 5 days or until pain controlled by non-narcotic pain medications and then may return to work with no use of the operative arm which must remain in the splint

PHASE I: 2 to 6 weeks post-op

- Splint will be removed and elbow will be placed into a hinged elbow brace
- Continue use of the brace at all times except dressing, bathing, and physical therapy
- Begin use of the operative arm for activities of daily living, but no lifting
- Begin physical therapy at 3 weeks:
 - Gentle passive motion exercises as tolerated
 - Modalities as needed: heat, ice, ultrasound, e-stim
- Work restrictions: no use of the operative arm

PHASE II: 6 to 12 weeks post-op

- No lifting greater than 5 pounds
- Continue P/AA/AROM exercises without ROM restrictions; FROM expected at 8 weeks
- Begin passive resistive exercises for flexion/extension and pronation/supination
- Progress to global strengthening
- Work restrictions:
 - Limited repetitive use or strenuous use of the operative arm
 - No lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 5 pounds

PHASE III: 12 to 18 weeks post-op

- No lifting greater than 15 pounds
- Endurance strengthening
- May begin gentle provocative exercise and light conditioning for sport/work
- Work restrictions: no lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 15 pounds

PHASE IV: 18 to 24 weeks post-op

- No lifting greater than 25 pounds
- Begin work-related or sports-specific conditioning
- Return to sports when strength and flexibility are within normal limits and when functional rehabilitation has been completed
- Goal is to return to sport without restrictions at 6 months post-op, however, overhead athletes must complete the throwing program and may take up to 1 year to return to normal
- Progress to work hardening/functional capacity evaluation if appropriate
- Work restrictions:
 - No lifting greater than 25 pounds
 - Goal of return to work without restrictions at 6 months post-op