

## **REHABILITATION PROTOCOL FOR POSTERIOR SHOULDER RECONSTRUCTION**

### **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 2 weeks

### **ACUTE PHASE: surgery to 4 weeks post-op**

- Immobilize the shoulder in the sling for 3 weeks and then gradually wean out of the sling during the day but continue wearing it at night for 6 weeks
- Remove sling 5 times a day to work on range of motion exercises for the hand, wrist, and elbow and work on shoulder shrugs and pendulum exercises
- Ice as needed
- Begin physical therapy at 2 weeks:
  - Gentle passive motion exercises limited to 90 degrees of flexion, 90 degrees of abduction, and external rotation from neutral (no internal rotation past neutral)
  - Isometrics for flexion/extension, adduction/abduction, and internal rotation/external rotation
  - Modalities as needed: heat, ice, ultrasound, e-stim
- 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 sling

### **PHASE I: 4 to 6 weeks post-op**

- Continue use of the operative arm for activities of daily living, but no lifting
- Continue pendulum exercises and isometrics at home
- Advance physical therapy to include:
  - PROM exercises with cane and pulley and AAROM for flexion/extension, abduction to 90 degrees and external rotation from neutral (no internal rotation past neutral)
  - Pulleys for flexion and abduction
  - AAROM for flexion, abduction, and external rotation
  - Begin scapular motion: elevation, depression, protraction/retraction
- Work restrictions: no work using the operative arm

### **PHASE II: 6 to 8 weeks post-op**

- No lifting greater than 5 pounds
- Begin AROM for flexion/extension, abduction, and external rotation from neutral (no internal rotation past neutral)
- Begin isotonic exercises: biceps curl, triceps extension, shoulder abduction, sidelying external rotation, and prone extensions
- Work restrictions:
  - Limited overhead use and limited repetitive or strenuous use of the operative arm
  - No lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 5 pounds

### **PHASE III: 8 to 12 weeks post-op**

- No lifting greater than 5 pounds
- Continue PROM exercises without restrictions
- Continue isotonic exercises, adding prone horizontal abduction, empty can to 90 degrees and flexion to 90 degrees
- Begin resisted internal rotation at 0 degrees abduction
- Begin scapular strengthening: rows, wall push-ups, middle/lower trapezius exercises
- Begin rhythmic stabilization exercises and co-contraction exercises
- Work restrictions:
  - Limited overhead use and limited repetitive or strenuous use of the operative arm
  - No lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 5 pounds

**PHASE IV: 12 to 24 weeks post-op**

- No lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 15 pounds until 18 weeks post-op and then no lifting greater than 25 pounds until 6 months post-op
- Continue isotonic exercises, adding exercises above 90 degrees abduction
- Continue stabilization exercises moving to mildly provocative positions
- Gradually advance to aggressive provocative overhead strengthening
- May begin light bench press, gradually increasing weight
- May begin all weight room activities at 18 weeks, gradually increasing weight
- Begin work-related or sports-specific conditioning at 18 weeks
- Return to sports when strength and flexibility are within normal limits and when functional rehabilitation has been completed
- In overhead athletes, begin the throwing program
- 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
- Given the increased risk of recurrent instability for 1 year after surgery, it would be beneficial to avoid contact sports or high risk sports entirely for 1 year post-op
- Progress to work-hardening/functional capacity evaluation if appropriate at 18 weeks
- Work restrictions:
  - No lifting, pushing, or pulling greater than 15 pounds until 18 weeks post-op and then no lifting greater than 25 pounds until 6 months post-op
  - Goal of return to work without restrictions at 6 months post-op