

**Orthopedic Associates of Hartford, P.C.**

**J. Kristopher Ware, M.D**

31 Seymour St #100

Date of Surgery:

Hartford, CT 06106

Phone: 860-244-1017, Fax: 860-524-8965

[www.oahct.com](http://www.oahct.com)

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**Post-Operative Rehabilitation Protocol:**

**Repair of Large Rotator Cuff Tear**

**PHASE I: PROTECTIVE PHASE (WEEKS 0-8)**

GOALS: Allow soft tissue healing, diminish pain/inflammation, establish motion, retard muscle atrophy.

**I. Immediate Post-Operative to Week 4:**

**A. General:**

- \* Sling with abduction pillow
- \* Cryotherapy unit or ice 20 minutes/hour

**B. Weight Bearing:**

- \* Non-weight bearing

**C. Range of Motion Goals:**

- \* Passive
  - o Forward flexion 0°-70°
  - o Abduction 0°-70°
  - o ER in plane of scapula 0°-30°
- \* ***NO combined forward elevation and internal rotation***
- \* ***NO internal rotation behind the back until 8 weeks***

**D. Treatment / Exercises:**

- \* Active elbow and wrist range of motion, hand gripping
- \* Cervical AROM/ Upper Trap and Levator Scapulae stretches
- \* Scapular protraction, retraction in sling
- \* Limited arc pendulums
- \* Table slides

**II. Weeks 4-8:**

**A. General:**

- \* Sling with abduction pillow
- \* Discontinue sling at 5-6 weeks
- \* Cryotherapy unit or ice 20 minutes/hour

**B. Weight Bearing:**

- \* Weight of arm once sling discontinued

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C. Range of Motion Goals:

\* Passive, AAROM

- o Forward flexion 0°-100°
- o Abduction 0°-100°
- o ER in plane of scapula 0°-40°
- o IR in plane of scapula 0°-30°

\* Begin AROM below shoulder level at 6 weeks

\* **NO** combined forward elevation and internal rotation

\* **NO** internal rotation behind the back until 8 weeks

D. Treatment / Exercises:

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Pendulum exercises
- \* Wall climbs or L-bar for AAROM
- \* Rope and pulley for flexion only
- \* Humeral head stabilization exercises
- \* Isometrics starting at 6 weeks

**PHASE II – INTERMEDIATE PHASE (WEEKS 8-16)**

GOALS: Progress to full motion, decrease pain, increase functional activities.

Enter Phase II if:

- ✓ ROM goals above are met
- ✓ Minimal pain/tenderness

**III. Weeks 8-10:**

A. General:

- \* Cryotherapy unit or ice 20 minutes/hour as needed

B. Weight Bearing:

- \* Weight of arm + 2 lbs below shoulder level

C. Range of Motion Goals:

\* PROM, AAROM, AROM

- o Forward flexion 0°-160°
- o Abduction 0°-160°
- o ER in plane of scapula 0°-45°
- o IR in plane of scapula 0°-45°
- o ER/IR at 90° abduction to tolerance

\* **NO** combined forward elevation and internal rotation

D. Treatment / Exercises:

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Exercise tubing ER/IR with arm at side

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- \* Active shoulder extension lying prone or standing (forward flexed at waist). Avoid extension of shoulder beyond plane of the body
- \* Isotonic dumbbell exercises: deltoid, elbow flexors, periscapular muscles

#### **IV. Weeks 10-16:**

##### **A. General:**

- \* Cryotherapy unit or ice 20 minutes/hour as needed

##### **B. Weight Bearing:**

- \* Weight of arm + 5 lbs below shoulder level

##### **C. Range of Motion Goals:**

- \* Progress to full PROM, AAROM, AROM as tolerated
- \* Goal of full ROM by Week 12-14

##### **D. Treatment / Exercises:**

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Initiate closed chain strengthening
- \* Side-lying ER/IR exercises
- \* Initiate neuromuscular periscapular control exercises
- \* Tubing and Theraband exercises. Progress to free weights as strength improves

#### **PHASE III – DYNAMIC STRENGTHENING PHASE (Months 4-6)**

GOALS: Maintain motion, improve strength and neuromuscular control.

Enter Phase III if:

- ✓ Full, painless ROM
- ✓ No pain/tenderness
- ✓ Satisfactory arm control without scapular substitution

#### **V. Months 4-5:**

A., B., C. As above

##### **D. Treatment / Exercises:**

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Capsular stretches
- \* Isotonic program – shoulder flexion, abduction, supraspinatus, ER/IR, elbow flexors/extensors, periscapular muscles
- \* Standing tubing rowing
- \* Horizontal abduction (prone lying or bent waist position) to plane of body; T,Y,I exercises

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\* Wall push ups. (Emphasize protraction phase.)

- \* Progress to floor push up (hands and knees), then standard push up
- \* Military press, light weight initially. Keep arm anterior to chest
- \* Add total body conditioning program

## **VI. Months 5-6:**

A., B., C. As above

### **D. Treatment / Exercises:**

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Progressive resistance exercises for RTC, Periscap and primary movers
- \* Ergometer exercise
- \* Initiate Interval Sport Program

## **PHASE IV: RETURN TO ACTIVITY PHASE (Months 6+)**

GOALS: Gradual return to recreational or competitive activity.

Enter Phase IV if:

- ✓ Full, painless ROM
- ✓ No pain/tenderness
- ✓ Satisfactory isokinetic test (Flex/Ex, Abd/Add)
- ✓ Satisfactory clinical exam

## **VII. Months 6+:**

A., B., C. As above

### **D. Treatment / Exercises:**

- \* Continue above treatment
- \* Resume normal training
- \* Isokinetic and endurance test to tolerance
- \* Continue basic ten programs for strengthening and flexibility
- \* Sport specific drills
- \* Return to competition if:
  - ✓ Full ROM
  - ✓ No pain/tenderness
  - ✓ Satisfactory strength (at least 95% of uninvolved arm)
  - ✓ Satisfactory clinical exam

\* **Addendum**

This protocol provides general rehabilitation guidelines following repair of a Large Rotator Cuff Tear. It is subject to modification depending on the degree of injury, the type and extent of associated surgical intervention, as well as your individual progress post-operatively. For any questions, please call my office at 860-244-1017.