


**Orthopaedic and Sports Injuries Services "OASIS"**

**Munawar Shah FRCS, FRCS Tr & Orth**

Consultant Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgeon

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## **Rehab Protocol for Rotator Cuff Surgery**

Vital to your recovery of good shoulder function is a graduated activity and exercise program to increase muscle strength and motion.

You will begin simple exercises the day of surgery. They should be done every day for the first week post-op, to maintain blood flow and help prevent blood clots.

Your physical therapy will begin 3-4 days after surgery. The physical therapist will guide you in your shoulder rehabilitation program. And, it is very important for you to start therapy when recommended.

To avoid complications, postoperative follow up appointments with your physician are also required to monitor your progress.

### **Rotator Cuff Repair Recovery Plan:**

#### **Day 1: The Day of Surgery**

Maintain dressing add 4x4 bandages if needed for drainage through dressing. Use ice pack for 20 slings on at all times. Move fingers and wrist often. Expect some swelling, if you have any change in skin color or sensation in arm, notify hospital.

When sleeping, most patients find sleeping in a semi-upright position is more comfortable for the first few weeks after shoulder surgery. ***Begin Hand Squeezing and Wrist range of motion exercises tonight.*** (See exercise list) **The arm sling must remain on at all other times, including bedtime.**

## **Day 2: The Day after Surgery**

Same as Day 1

### **Day 3: (usually about 48 hours after surgery):**

Continue same activities, including using ice for 20 minute periods as needed. You should remove your dressing. You may remove the sling to shower today, supporting the affected arm with the opposite hand. You may wash the skin around the incisions. When washing the under arm, do not use a large amount of soap. It may dry out the skin and cause a rash. After a short shower, dry the shoulder well and place Band-aids over incisions. You may begin *elbow range of motion exercise* today. Physical therapy will start today unless otherwise directed by Mr. M Shah Add *Biceps Curls* to your home exercise program

### **Days 7-10:**

Change band-aids as daily as needed. Maintain sling use. Continue exercises, adding *Wall Walking and Pendulum exercises*.

**The first Post-op visit:** Usually after 7-10 days: Your sutures will be removed at this visit. Further instructions will be given to your rehabilitation and recovery. You may increase your biceps curls by add light weight only if comfortable.

## **Exercises: *Do three times each day as directed***

### **Starting Day 1:**

**Hand Squeezes or Grip Strengthening:** Using a small soft rubber ball or soft sponge, squeeze your hand. When in the shower, you can use a sponge filled with water. Do this for 3-5 sets of 10-20 repetitions each day. If this is too easy, later in the rehab course you can use a grip strengthener.

**Wrist Range of Motion:** Roll your wrist in circles for 30 seconds after each round of grip exercises.

### **On Day 3 add:**

**Elbow Range of Motion:** Turning your palm inward, towards your stomach, flex and extend the elbow as comfort allows. This will decrease pain and prevent elbow stiffness.

### **On Day 4 add:**

**Pendulum Exercise:** Holding the side of a table with your good arm, bend over at the waist, and let the affected arm hang down. Swing the arm back and forth like a pendulum. Then swing in small circles and slowly make them larger. Do this for a minute or two at a time, rest, then repeat for a total of 5 minutes, 3 times per day

### **Not before Day 7-10 add:**

**Wall Walking:** Stand facing a blank wall with your feet about 12 inches away. “Walk” the fingers of the affected hand up the wall as high as comfort allows. Mark the spot and try to go higher next time. Do at least 10 repetitions, 3 times per day. When more comfortable and stronger (not before three weeks) do these exercise sideways, with the affected side facing the wall. Do not let the hand drop down from the wall- walk your fingers down as well as up. Dropping the arm will strain the repair and be painful. If having weakness on the way down, feel free to use the other arm to help.

**Biceps Curls:** Curl the arm up and down 12 times; rest for one minute and repeat for a total of 3 sets of 12. When comfortable try it holding a very small can to start, in a few days you can increase can size only as comfort allows. This exercise should not be painful. If painful decrease or eliminate the weight.

### **General Instructions All Rotator Cuff Repair Patients:**

**Diet:** You may resume a **regular diet** when you return home. Most patients start with tea or broth adding crackers or toast, then a non-spicy sandwich. If you become nauseated, check to see if one of your medications is upsetting your stomach, most narcotics can. If your stomach feels acidic, try **Tums, Zantac** or **Pepcid** to settle it and drink some clear liquids.

**Lungs:** After surgery you are encouraged to **deep breathe** and cough frequently (at least 3-4 times per day). This will reduce mucous from building up in your lungs, and will reduce the risk of developing a post anesthetic pneumonia.

**Pain Control:** Take medication as prescribed by Mr. M Shah.

**Sling:** Patients are to wear the poly sling at all times for 3 weeks. Move fingers and wrist often. Expect some swelling. Use Ice pack for 20 minutes periods throughout the first 24 hours after surgery and then as needed. It is recommended that patients wear the sling when going out for the next 3 weeks. This will help to alert others to avoid the affected arm during this healing period.

**Driving:** Patients cannot drive until they are off all pain medications, completely out of the sling, and can easily place hands at 12:00 position on the steering wheel and can move hands freely from the 9:00 – 3:00 position.

**Airline Flights:** Patients may fly 2-3 weeks after surgery on short flights (up to 2 hours) but should in general wait 6-8 weeks for longer flights. You should get up and walk frequently to avoid blood clots and take an aspirin (unless allergic.)

**Returning to Work:** A patient with a small tear, and/or low demand work, can usually return to work within 3 weeks. They will still have restrictions on lifting and overhead use. Patients with higher demand jobs or repetitive arm use need at least 6 weeks. Any heavy labor with overhead lifting can take at least 4-6 months.

**Contact Hospital If:**

**\*\*You develop excessive, prolonged nausea or vomiting**

**\*\*You develop a fever above 101.**

**\*\*You develop any type of rash;**

**\*\*You experience calf pain**

**Blood Clots:**

*Patients at high risk for blood clots include:*

Those with long car or train commutes

May be overweight

Have a history of having cancer

Females on birth control pills

Males over the age of 40

*These patients should be taking 1 aspirin per day for 6 weeks after surgery unless allergic to aspirin.*

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