

Brief Post-Op Protocols for Shoulder Therapy

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	Impingement (no cuff tear)	Small Rotator Cuff Tear & Shoulder Replacement	Large Cuff Tear (abduction pillow)*	Anterior (front side) Reconstruction	Posterior (back side) Reconstruction
1 week	passive ROM active assisted in most cases	passive ROM	No ROM exercises	No PT Sling	No PT Gunslinger brace
3 weeks	active	active assisted	Passive ROM with pillow on (in some cases smaller pillow is now used)	Start ROM, 3-4th week; ER < 20° until week 4	Start ROM, 3-4th week; IR < 20° until week 4
6 weeks	Theraband in IR (if can be done with no pain) Theraband in ER	Active (no lifting)	Continue PASSIVE motion (d/c pillow or switch to small pillow)	active assisted	Start Passive ROM; d/c brace; Immobilizer shoulder only, 2 wks
8 weeks			active assisted	active ROM	active assisted
10 weeks	Therabands - all planes (every other day)	Therabands - IR and ER (every other day)	Active (no lifting)		
12 weeks	Increase activities	All planes	Therabands - IR and ER (every other day)	start Therabands	active ROM start gentle Therabands
16 weeks			Therabands, all planes; 5-10 weights		
3 months	may return to golf with short swing -- e.g., chipping is OK				
6 months	may return to full golf and softball		return to golf	return to golf	return to golf
9-12 months	return to football, baseball, etc.		return to all other sports	return to all sports	return to all sports

General notes for all cases: **Shoulder strengthening exercises be done only every other day.**

ROM (range of motion) can be done every day -- 2 to 3 sessions each day.

ROM includes pendulum, pulley, and stick (these are for ROM and stretching only -- NOT for strengthening)

Moist heat is good after 3 weeks.

IR = internal rotation; **ER** = external rotation

* Details for you or your physical therapist: **for Large to Massive Rotator Cuff Tears**, from Bigliani and others (1992 Journal of Shoulder and Elbow Surgery): "Exercises were started early in all patients. Passive, assisted exercises were done for the first 8 weeks. Early in the series an abduction brace was used for 6 weeks in 42 (69%) patients. Assisted forward elevation and external rotation were started from the brace [with the brace on] on the second postoperative day. After the brace was removed these patients had additional passive exercises, including external rotation with a stick and pendulum and pulley exercises, for 2 weeks before active exercises were started. Patients who were not treated with an abduction brace were started with assisted forward elevation on the first postoperative day. External rotation with the stick and pendulum movements was added on the second postoperative day. These were the only three exercises that the patients performed for 6 weeks. Pulley exercises were performed for 6 weeks, and gentle, resistive exercises were started after 8 weeks and progressed accordingly. **Exercises with weights were avoided for at least 3 months in the postoperative period, and then only 1- and 2-pound weights were used. It is important to emphasize that it may take 12 to 18 months to achieve the final result; early aggressive strengthening should not be done.**"

*** Important note from Dr. Skedros: Large and massive rotator cuff tears can improve for up to 18 months after surgery. Therefore, don't give up -- keep doing your home therapy even after your therapist has finished.**