

### **Post-op rehabilitation program for total elbow replacement**

**Problem:** significant arthritis of elbow with pain and reduce function

**Aim:** to decrease pain and increase function in elbow

**Important points:** Range of movement must commence straight away, as initial range of movement may be lost

#### **Forbidden:**

- active elbow flexion and active wrist strengthening for 4 weeks
- forced active elbow extension for 8 weeks (protect repair of extensor mechanism)

**Expectations:** return to full functional use at 12-16 weeks

#### **Physiotherapy protocol day 1 onwards:**

- Ensure adequate pain relief, neurovascular status normal and no signs of infection
- Hand, shoulder and wrist exercises
- Active assist extension, flexion, pronation and supination within comfort zone
- Thermoplastic extension splint to be made prior to discharge and worn at night for 6 weeks

#### **Physiotherapy protocol day 4 onwards:**

- Begin active pronation, supination, elbow extension and wrist movement
- Gentle grip strengthening
- Sling only out of the house

#### **Physiotherapy protocol week 6 onwards:**

- Begin active elbow extension but not against resistance
- Biceps strengthening with elbow support
- Begin wrist extension, flexion and elbow flexion strengthening

#### **Physiotherapy protocol week 8 onwards:**

- Active range of movement in all directions