

**Post-op rehabilitation program for large (3-5cm) rotator cuff repair**

**Problem:** rotator cuff tear with reduced range of movement, strength and shoulder pain

**Aim:** to increase range of movement, strength and reduce pain

**Forbidden:**

- Must avoid lifting elbow from side for 4 weeks
- Do not stretch for 8 weeks
- No lifting above shoulder height or lifting with a straight arm for 16 weeks

**Expectations:**

- Return to sedentary jobs as pain allows (0-3 months)
- Return to manual jobs may take 4-8 months
- Driving after 8 weeks (if pain and function allows safe driving).
- Breaststroke swimming, jogging and cycling from 15 weeks
- Consider contact, racquet sports and freestyle swimming after 6 months

**Physiotherapy protocol day 1 onwards:**

- Wear sling for 3 weeks and then wean out as pain allows
- May require abduction brace for 3 weeks
- Ensure adequate pain relief, neurovascular status normal and no signs of infection
- Shoulder shrugs
- Elbow and wrist exercises

**Physiotherapy protocol day 21 onwards:**

- Remain in sling or transfer to normal sling if in abduction brace
- Active assisted forward elevation in forward lean standing, prone and supine
- Isometric internal rotation in inner range
- Passive external rotation to neutral
- Pendulums in forward lean standing

**Physiotherapy protocol 6 weeks onwards:**

- Sling for comfort only
- Add proprioception exercises when control good
- NB superior migration of head is a sign of poor control
- Progress scapular control into range
- Start isometric rotator cuff exercises
- Check scapular control throughout range
- Closed chain exercises

**Physiotherapy protocol 8 weeks onwards:**

- Start stretching if needed
- Start resisted strengthening exercises
- Start closed chain exercises

**Physiotherapy protocol 12 weeks onwards:**

- Full range of movement
- Progress strengthening into range
- Continue to increase proprioceptive work