

Physical Therapy Protocol Following AC Joint Reconstruction

Shoulder Immobilizer: 6 weeks (sleep included)

Post-Op Weeks 0-6:

Goals:

1. Allow soft tissue healing
2. Early protected ROM
3. Prevent muscle atrophy
4. Decrease pain / inflammation
5. Restricted activities:
 - *AROM on operative shoulder
 - *Lifting objects with operative shoulder

Exercises:

1. PROM/AAROM/AROM for elbow, wrist and hand
2. Painless PROM in all planes with patient supine
 - *Forward flexion to 70 degrees in scapular plane
 - *Abduction in scapular plane to 70 degrees
 - *Internal rotation to tolerance
 - *External rotation to tolerance
3. Scapular clock progress to scapular isometric exercises

Criteria before Phase 2: Minimal pain and inflammation

Post-Op Weeks 6-12:

Goals:

1. Gradual increase in ROM
2. Improve strength
3. Decrease pain/inflammation
4. FROM (including extension) should be achieved by week 12
5. Continue to avoid contact activities

Exercises:

1. Painless ROM:
 - *AAROM progression (weeks 7 and 8)
 - *AROM progression (weeks 9 and 10)
2. GH extension is unrestricted after week 10
3. Continue deltoid and rotator cuff isometric exercises

Criteria before Phase 3: Minimal pain, nearly complete ROM

Post-Op Weeks 12-18:

Goals:

1. Normalize ROM
2. Improve strength
3. Improve neuromuscular control
4. Restrictive activities:
 - *Contact sports
 - *No pressing activities or lifting from the floor

5. Strengthening and functional activities in given plane only after full ROM and strength is achieved in that specific plane of movement

Exercises:

1. Start resisted GH and scapular exercises with light weights
2. Emphasis should be placed on strengthening the scapular stabilizers

Criteria before Phase 4 : Full painless ROM, satisfactory clinical exam, muscle strength that fulfills work/sports requirements

Post-Op Weeks 16-20:

Goals:

1. Continue stretching and PROM as needed
2. Maintain full, non-painful AROM
3. Return to full strenuous work activities
4. Return to full recreational activities
5. Restricted activities:
 - *Scaption with IR (empty can) due to impingement
 - *Excessive stress on anterior capsule
 - *Weight lifting activities of tricep dips, wide grip bench press, military press or lat pull downs behind head
 - *Throwing or overhead activity until cleared by MD at 4 months

Exercises:

1. Continue previous exercises and progress isotonic strengthening if WNL
2. Overhead strengthening if ROM and strength below 90° is good
3. Continue stretching and strengthening activities > 4x/week
4. Progressive UE weight lifting emphasizing larger, primary muscles of deltoid, lats and pec major. Initially with light weight and high reps (15-25)
5. General UE weight lifting with light weight and high reps with lifting precautions
6. Push-ups with elbows flexed 90°

Criteria before Phase 4 : No pain or instability with previous phase, physician and PT clearance and adequate ROM and full strength/endurance of rotator cuff and scapular musculature for task completion

Post-Op Weeks 16-20:

Goals:

1. Pain free pre-injury and sports activities

Exercises:

1. Continue home exercise program
2. Plyometrics/ interval sports program after PT and MD clearance
3. Pre-injury activities and vigorous sports after MD clearance
4. Throwing and overhead athletic moves

Criteria for release to sport(s):

1. ROM is symmetric and painless
2. Strength is 90% of contralateral side