



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ARTHROSCOPIC/OPEN ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

Are there differences between an arthroscopic and open rotator cuff repair?

- While the incision sites look smaller with an arthroscopic procedure, it is important to remember that the same tissues were still repaired and thus the same post-operative precautions regarding tissue-healing time for repaired muscle/tendon are observed.

How should I manage my surgical site, dressing and steri-strips?

- Change your dressing every other day as needed.
- Allow the steri-strips to fall off on their own. If necessary, sutures will be removed at the first post-operative visit with your surgeon's office.
- You may shower with a watertight bandage in two days, but keep the incision dry until the sutures are removed in seven to ten days. Try not to let the direct spray of water from the showerhead hit the incision.

Do I need to wear a sling? If so, how long do I wear it and when can I take it off during the day?

- You will be instructed by your surgeon to wear your sling from four to six weeks depending upon the size of your tear and thus the extent of the rotator cuff repair, and the sling should be worn at all times.
- You may have a small foam pillow between your arm and your body. This should be left in place at all times while wearing the sling.
- While in the sling, the elbow should be bent at a right angle, and the hand should be level with your elbow or slightly higher. The elbow should be resting slightly in front of your body.
- You may remove the sling for exercises as prescribed by the surgeon, icing, and dressing, and showering.



What are my precautions regarding movements and positions after surgery? What positions should I rest my arm in? What positions should I avoid?

- Do not actively move your arm away from your body for four to six weeks following surgery.
- Follow your surgeon's directions regarding rotating your forearm away from your body to protect repaired tendon and muscles.

May I use my involved arm for dressing, bathing, driving, and other daily activities? How should I manage my arm in the shower?

- You may use your wrist, hand, and elbow for daily activities. This includes eating, shaving, dressing, as long as you do not move your operated arm away from your body and it does not increase your pain.
- Do not use your arm to push up/off the bed or chair for six weeks after your surgery.
- When using your keyboard and mouse, do not move your arm away from your body.
- When showering, you may wash under the involved arm/axilla by bending forward to let the involved arm hang freely and reaching under with the opposite arm
- Do not actively move your arm away from your body.

Are there any exercises I should be doing prior to starting physical therapy?

- You may be instructed by your doctor/physical therapist to do pendulum exercises within 24 to 48 hours after your surgery.
- You may gently stretch your hand/wrist exercises as it feels comfortable
- Make sure you keep good posture at all times.



When should I begin formal physical therapy? How often do I need to go?

- Physical therapy can be usually initiated within the first six weeks following surgery and your surgeon will refer you when the time is appropriate. This includes physical therapy sessions at the clinic, in addition to a home exercise program for range of motion and postural exercises.
- Frequency of treatment will be determined by your specific needs together with the physician and physical therapist recommendations.

When may I start strengthening?

- Typically, strengthening does not begin until twelve weeks post operatively.

When may I return to sports and recreational activities?

- Return to sports and recreational activities are specific to the particular activity, but generally no sooner than for to six months.
- Always seek permission from your surgeon prior to starting any sport related activity.

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