

Total Shoulder Arthroplasty / Hemiarthroplasty Therapy Protocol

The intent of this protocol is to provide the therapist with a guideline of the postoperative rehabilitation course of a patient that has undergone a total shoulder arthroplasty (TSA) or hemiarthroplasty (humeral head replacement, HHR). It is not intended to be a substitute for appropriate clinical decision-making regarding the progression of a patient's postoperative course. The actual post-surgical therapy management must be based on the surgical approach, physical exam, individual progress, and the presence of postoperative complications. If a therapist requires assistance in the progression of a patient post-surgery, consult with the referring surgeon.

Please Note:

Patients with a concomitant repair of a rotator cuff tear and/or a TSA/HHR secondary to fracture should be progressed to the next phase based on meeting the clinical criteria (not based on the postoperative time frames) as appropriate in collaboration with the referring surgeon. The given time frames are an approximate guide for progression. Achieving the clinical criteria should guide the therapist and patient through this protocol.

Passive Range of Motion (PROM): PROM for all patients having undergone a TSA/HHR should be defined as ROM that is provided by an external source (therapist, instructed family member, or other qualified personnel) with the intent to gain ROM without placing undue stress on either soft tissue structures and/or the surgical repair.

PROM is not stretching!!!!!!

Phase I – Immediate Post-Surgical Phase:

Goals:

- Allow healing of soft tissue
- Maintain integrity of replaced joint
- Gradually increase passive range of motion (PROM) of shoulder; restore active range of motion (AROM) of elbow/wrist/hand
- Reduce pain and inflammation
- Reduce muscular inhibition
- Independent with activities of daily living (ADLs) with modifications while maintaining the integrity of the replaced joint.

Precautions:

- Sling should be worn continuously for 3-4 weeks
- While lying supine, a small pillow or towel roll should be placed behind the elbow to avoid shoulder hyperextension / anterior capsule stretch / subscapularis stretch. **(When lying supine, the patient should be instructed to always be able to visualize their elbow. This ensures they are not extending their shoulder past neutral.) This should be maintained for 6-8 weeks post-surgically.**
- Avoid shoulder AROM
- No lifting of objects
- No excessive shoulder motion behind back, especially into internal rotation (IR)
- No excessive stretching or sudden movements, particularly external rotation (ER)
- No supporting of body weight by hand on the involved side
- Keep incision clean and dry, may rinse off in a shower with clean soap and water, but no soaking for 2 weeks
- No driving for 3 weeks

Post-Operative Day (POD) #1 (in hospital):

- Passive forward flexion in supine to tolerance
- Gentle ER in scapular plane to available PROM (as documented in operative note) – usually around 30°
- **Attention:** DO NOT produce undue stress on the anterior joint capsule, particularly with the shoulder in extension.
- Passive IR to chest
- Active distal extremity exercise (elbow, wrist, hand)
- Pendulum exercises
- Frequent cryotherapy for pain, swelling, and inflammation management
- Patient education regarding proper positioning and joint protection techniques

Early Phase I: (out of hospital)

- Continue above exercises
- Begin scapula musculature isometrics / sets (primarily retraction)
- Begin assisted flexion, elevation in the plane of the scapula, ER / IR in the scapular plane
- Progress active distal extremity exercise to strengthening as appropriate

Criteria for progression to the next phase (II):

If the patient has not reached the below ROM, forceful stretching and mobilization/manipulation is not indicated. Continue gradual ROM and gentle mobilization (i.e. Grade I oscillations), while respecting soft tissue constraints.

- Tolerates PROM program
- Has achieved at least 90° PROM forward flexion and elevation in the scapular plane

- Has achieved at least 45° PROM ER in plane of scapular
- Has achieved at least 70° PROM IR in plane of scapula measured at 30° of abduction

Phase II – Early Strengthening Phase

(Not to begin before 4-6 weeks post-surgery to allow for appropriate soft tissue healing):

Goals:

- Restore full passive ROM
- Gradually restore active motion
- Control pain and inflammation
- Allow continue healing of soft tissue
- Do not overstress healing tissue
- Re-establish dynamic shoulder stability

Precautions:

- Sling should only be used for sleeping and removed gradually over the course of the next 2 weeks, for periods throughout the day.
- While lying supine, a small pillow or towel should be placed behind the elbow to avoid shoulder hyperextension / anterior capsular stretch.
- In the presence of poor shoulder mechanics, avoid repetitive shoulder AROM exercises and activities against gravity in standing.
- No heavy lifting of objects (no heavier than coffee cup)
- No supporting of body weight by hand on involved side
- No sudden jerking motions

Early Phase II:

- Continue the PROM, active assisted range of motion (AAROM)
- Begin active flexion, IR, ER, elevation in the plane of the scapula as pain free ROM
- AAROM pulleys (flexion and elevation in the plane of the scapula) – as long as greater than 90° of PROM
- Begin shoulder sub-maximal pain-free shoulder isometrics in neutral
- Scapular strengthening exercises as appropriate
- Begin assisted horizontal adduction
- Progress distal extremity exercises with light resistance as appropriate
- Gentle glenohumeral and scapulothoracic joint mobilizations as indicated
- Initiate glenohumeral and scapulothoracic rhythmic stabilization
- Continue use of cryotherapy for pain and inflammation

Late Phase II:

- Progress scapular strengthening exercises

Criteria for progression to the next phase (III):

If the patient has not reached the below ROM, forceful stretching and mobilization/manipulation is not indicated. Continue gradual ROM and gentle mobilization (i.e. Grade I oscillations), while respecting soft tissue constraints.

- Tolerates P/AAROM, isometric program
- Has achieved at least 140° PROM forward flexion and elevation in the scapular plane.
- Has achieved at least 60+° PROM ER in plane of scapula
- Has achieved at least 70° PROM IR in plane of scapula measured at 30° of abduction
- Able to actively elevate shoulder against gravity with good mechanics to 100°

Phase III – Moderate Strengthening Phase

(Not to begin before 6 weeks post-surgery to allow for appropriate soft tissue healing and to ensure adequate ROM):

Goals:

- Gradual restoration of shoulder strength, power, and endurance
- Optimize neuromuscular control
- Gradual return to functional activities with involved upper extremity

Precautions:

- No heavy lifting of objects (no heavier than 8 lbs.)
- No sudden lifting or pushing activities
- No sudden jerking motions

Early Phase III:

- Progress AROM exercise / activity as appropriate
- Advance PROM to stretching as appropriate
- Continue PROM as need to maintain ROM
- Initiate assisted shoulder IR behind back stretch
- Resisted shoulder IR, ER in scapular plane
- Begin light functional activities
- Wean from sling completely
- Begin progressive supine active elevation strengthening (anterior deltoid) with light weights (1 – 3 lbs.) at variable degrees of elevation

Late Phase III:

- Resisted flexion, elevation in the plane of the scapula, extension (therabands / sport cords)
- Continue progressing IR, ER strengthening

- Progress IR stretch behind back from AAROM to AROM as ROM allows (Pay particular attention as to avoid stress on the anterior capsule.)

Criteria for progression to the next phase (IV):

If the patient has not reached the below ROM, forceful stretching and mobilization/manipulation is not indicated. Continued gradual ROM and gentle mobilization (i.e. Grade I oscillations), while respecting soft tissue constraints.

- Tolerates AA/AROM/strengthening
- Has achieved at least 140° AROM forward flexion and elevation in the scapular plane supine.
- Has achieved at least 60+° AROM ER in plane of scapula supine
- Has achieved at least 70° AROM IR in plane of scapula supine in 30° of abduction
- Able to actively elevate shoulder against gravity with good mechanics to at least 120°

Note: (If the above ROM is not met, the patient may still be ready to progress, if their ROM is consistent with outcomes for patients with the given underlying pathology.)

Phase IV – Advanced Strengthening Phase

(Not to begin before 12 weeks to allow for appropriate soft tissue healing and to ensure adequate ROM, and initial strength):

Goals:

- Maintain non-painful AROM
- Enhance functional use of upper extremity
- Improve muscular strength, power, and endurance
- Gradual return to more advanced functional activities
- Progress weight bearing exercises as appropriate

Precautions;

- Avoid exercise and functional activities that put stress on the anterior capsule and surrounding structures. (Example: no combined ER and abduction above 80° of abduction.)
- Ensure gradual progression of strengthening

Early Phase IV:

Typically patient is on a home exercise program by this point to be performed 3-4 times per week.

- Gradually progress strengthening program
- Gradual return to moderately challenging functional activities.

Late Phase IV (Typically 4-6 months post-op):

- Return to recreational hobbies, gardening, sports, golf, doubles tennis

Criteria for discharge from skilled therapy:

- Patient able to maintain non-painful AROM
- Maximized functional use of upper extremity
- Maximized muscular strength, power, and endurance
- Patient has returned to advanced functional activities

References:

Wilcox RB, Arslanian LE, Millett PJ. *Rehabilitation Following Total Shoulder Arthroplasty*. J Orthop Sports Phys Ther. 2005; 35 (12): 821-836.

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