

# ORTHO SPORTS



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## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

Recovery after Rotator Cuff Repair can be frustratingly slow. A dull ache can be troublesome, especially at night. Wearing a sling is annoying. Sometimes at 3 months post-op my patients wonder when they will get better. However they almost always do, and the results are usually gratifying. The shoulder almost always feels strong again, works properly and doesn't hurt. The results also last, with the literature supporting good results 5, 10 and 15 years later.

It takes at least four months for the repair to gain any real strength. For this reason protecting the repair is paramount.

### A. COMFORT:

Although arthroscopy uses only a few tiny incisions around the shoulder joint, swelling and discomfort can be present. To minimize discomfort, please do the following:

1. **Ice** – Ice controls swelling and discomfort by slowing down the circulation in your shoulder. Place crushed ice in a plastic bag, then wrap the bag with a small towel to protect your skin. Place the ice over your shoulder for no more than 10 minutes, 3-4 times a day.
2. **Pain Medication** – If your anaesthetist has prescribed a pain medication for you, take it as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. If no pain medication has been prescribed, Paracetamol can be used. **Avoid alcohol if you are taking strong pain medication.**
3. **Sling** – A sling has been provided for your comfort and to protect the repair. You will need to wear it for at least four weeks. (Longer if you have a grade 2 or 3 repair). You must sleep with the sling on. While asleep it is easy to fling your arm above your head and undo all the good work!  
You can take your sling off while resting in a chair, watching TV or reading a book as long as your arm simply rests in your lap. Keep your elbow at your side.
4. **Motion** – Regaining motion in your shoulder and arm can decrease pain and hasten your recovery. For the first four weeks motion will be PASSIVE. This means that your arm only moves if it is being moved by gravity, by your other arm or by your therapist.

**Pendulum exercises** are the only exercises you will be asked to do in the first few weeks. Sit in a chair, carefully take your sling off, hang your arm at your side with your elbow locked out straight, lean forward over your knees and gently swing your

arm forwards and backwards like a pendulum. Support your upper arm with your good hand. Do this for 2-3 minutes 3-4 times per day. It should not be painful. Don't push too hard. Wait until day 2 or 3 as if this exercise is done in the first 48 hours it simply increases your pain.

## **B. ACTIVITIES:**

1. **Range-of-Motion** – Pendulum exercises only. Use your good arm to assist the operated arm.
2. **Daily Activities** – You can use your hand to carry light objects such as a cup or a plate as long as you keep your elbow by your side. You can use a keyboard by loosening the waist strap of the sling. Driving an automatic car is possible after a few weeks by holding the steering wheel near the bottom.
3. **Athletic Activities** – It is difficult to do much more than a brisk walk or gently pedal an exercycle with your arm in a sling.
4. **Return to Work** – Return to work as soon as possible. Your ability to work depends on a number of factors – your level of discomfort and how much demand your job puts on your shoulder and arm. Simple desk duties are possible at 7-10 days post-op. Light duties at 6 weeks post-op. Heavy manual labour can only be undertaken after 5-6 months. The most difficult activity will be working and lifting above shoulder height. This can take 6 months. If you have any questions, please call your doctor.
5. **Sleeping**  
A shoulder that has been pain-free all day long can start to ache as soon as the lights go out. Taking pain relief an hour before bed is a good idea. Most people are more comfortable propped up on 5 or 6 pillows, sleeping in a semi-inclined position. This may seem awkward for the first few nights but avoids a painful wake up when you roll on to your operated arm!
6. **Dressing**  
Once dry from the shower, remember to put your operated arm through the sleeve of your shirt first. Dangle your operated arm at your side and you can't go too far wrong. Just remember it is not allowed to lift away from your side under its own power.

## **C. WOUND CARE:**

1. On the day of discharge your dressing will be changed to a lightweight waterproof dressing. (It is not applied immediately post-op as the arthroscopic saline leaks out and soaks all of the dressings)
2. You can shower with this dressing on.
3. Do not soak in the bath as the dressings are not that waterproof....
4. The dressing does not need to be changed before your first post-op visit. If it gets soiled and needs changing, similar dressings are available from your local chemist (Tegaderm or Primapore)

**D. EATING:**

1. Your first few meals, after arthroscopy, should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience slight nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

**E. CALL DR BRICK'S OFFICE IF:**

1. Pain in your shoulder persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material presents itself around the arthroscopy incisions.
3. You have a temperature elevation greater than 37.5° with no apparent cause.
4. You have pain, swelling or redness in your arm or hand.
5. You notice numbness or weakness in your arm or hand.

**F. RETURN DR BRICK'S OFFICE AT MILLENNIUM:**

1. Your first return to our office should be within the first 1-2 weeks after your surgery. The appointment time is included in the pre-operative pack posted to you. If you need to change the time, call Andrea, Marija or Jo at the Millennium office on 477 2080.