

Winston Salem Shoulder

Dr. S. Bradley Winter, MD • OrthoCarolina

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Rotator Cuff Repair — Postoperative Rehabilitation Protocol

Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair • Dr. S. Bradley Winter, MD

PHASE 1: PROTECTION & EARLY MOTION | Weeks 0–6

GOALS

- Protect the repair
- Reduce pain and swelling
- Maintain passive ROM within limits

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- Pendulum exercises (Codman)
- Passive forward flexion to 90°
- Passive ER to 30° (or per surgeon)
- Elbow/wrist/hand ROM
- Scapular retraction (non-resisted)
- Cryotherapy 3–4x daily

PRECAUTIONS

- No active shoulder motion
- Sling at all times except therapy
- No lifting, pushing, or pulling

PHASE 2: ACTIVE-ASSISTED MOTION | Weeks 6–10

GOALS

- Progress to full PROM
- Begin AAROM
- Initiate periscapular strengthening

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- AAROM forward flexion and ER
- Pulleys
- Supine ER with cane
- Periscapular isometrics
- Scapular stability exercises

PRECAUTIONS

- No resisted IR or ER yet
- Avoid positions of impingement

PHASE 3: STRENGTHENING | Weeks 10–16

GOALS

- Restore full AROM
- Begin rotator cuff strengthening
- Functional strength

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- Theraband IR/ER progression
- Side-lying ER
- Prone row and extension
- Forward flexion to full elevation
- Dynamic stabilization drills

PRECAUTIONS

- No heavy lifting >5 lbs
- Avoid overhead pressing

PHASE 4: ADVANCED STRENGTHENING & RETURN TO ACTIVITY | Weeks 16–24+

GOALS

- Full strength
- Return to sport or work
- Overhead function

EXERCISES / ACTIVITIES

- Progressive resistance training
- Overhead pressing (if cleared)
- Sport-specific drills
- Plyometric shoulder program
- Work hardening if applicable

PRECAUTIONS

- Return to sport requires surgeon clearance
- Throwers may require 9–12 months

This protocol is a general guideline and may be modified by Dr. Winter based on intraoperative findings, tissue quality, and individual patient factors. Do not progress through phases without clearance from your surgeon or physical therapist. Questions? Contact OrthoCarolina at (336) 765-5400.

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