



# Charlotte Shoulder Institute

Patient Centered. Research Driven. Outcome Maximized.

James R. Romanowski, M.D.

Novant Health Orthopedics and Sports Medicine  
2826 Randolph Rd.  
Charlotte, NC 28211  
704-358-0308 (Office)  
704-358-0037 (Fax)  
[www.charlotteshoulder.com](http://www.charlotteshoulder.com)

## DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS & PHYSICAL THERAPY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARTHROSCOPIC ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

Initial recovery after shoulder surgery entails healing, controlling swelling and discomfort and regaining some shoulder motion. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you achieve these goals until your 1<sup>st</sup> postoperative visit.

### A. Comfort:

Although surgery uses small 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 cloth covered plastic bag over your shoulder for no more than 20 minutes, 3 times a day.
2. **Pain Medication-** Take medications as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. Avoid alcohol and driving if you are taking pain medication.
3. **Sling-** A sling has been provided for your comfort and should be worn as described below.
4. **Driving** – Driving is NOT permitted as long as the sling is necessary.

### B. Activities:

1. You are immobilized with a sling and abductor pillow, full time, for approximately one month. Your doctor can tell you when you can discontinue use of the sling at your 1<sup>st</sup> postoperative visit. The sling may be removed for exercises and for hygiene.

2. Your sling may be removed for gentle PASSIVE range-of-motion (PROM) exercises. (SOMEONE ELSE MOVES YOUR SHOULDER). This should be done 3x a day /15 repetitions (ABDUCTION ONLY – away from your body).
3. While your sling is off you should flex and extend your elbow and wrist – (3x a day for 15 repetitions) to avoid elbow stiffness.
4. Handball squeezes should be done in the sling (3x a day for 15 squeezes).
5. You may NOT move your shoulder by yourself in certain directions. NO active flexion (lifting arm up) or abduction (lifting arm away from body) until Dr. Romanowski or your therapist gives permission. These exercises must be done by someone else (Passive Range of Motion).
6. Physical therapy will begin approximately 3-4 weeks after surgery. Make an appointment with a therapist of your choice for this period of time. You will be given a prescription and instructions for therapy at your 1<sup>st</sup> post op or 1-month visit. Please take these with you to your first therapy visit.
7. Athletic activities such as throwing, lifting, swimming, bicycling, jogging, running, and stop-and-go sports should be avoided until cleared by Dr. Romanowski.

**C. Wound Care:**

1. Keep the dressing on, clean and dry until your 1-week post op follow up appointment.
2. Should your dressing come off, you may apply band-aids to the small incisions around your shoulder.
3. You may shower the first day after surgery with the dressings in place.
4. Bathing, swimming, and soaking should be avoided for two weeks after your surgery.

**D. Eating:**

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

**C. Call your physician if:**

1. Pain persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material from the wounds. (Clear red tinted fluid and some mild drainage should be expected). Drainage of any kind 5 days after surgery should be reported to the doctor.
3. Temperature elevation greater than 101°.
4. Pain, swelling, or redness in your arm or hand.
5. Numbness or weakness in your arm or hand.
6. Chest pain or difficulty breathing.

**D. Return to the office**

Your first return to the office should be within the first 1-2 weeks after your surgery. Call Dr. Romanowski's office to make your first postoperative appointment.

## **DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS & PHYSICAL THERAPY INSTRUCTIONS FOR ARTHROSCOPIC ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR**

### **2 TO 5 WEEKS POST-SURGERY**

1. Patient to continue sling.
2. Use of modalities as needed (heat, ice, electrotherapy)
3. Continue passive range-of-motion exercises – active-assistive (wall climbs, wand) and active ROM exercises may be added
4. Add joint mobilization as needed
5. Isometric exercises – internal/external rotation, abduction, flexion, extension
6. Active internal/external rotation exercises with rubber/surgical tubing (as tolerated)
7. Active shoulder extension lying prone or standing (bending at the waist) – avoid the shoulder extended position by preventing arm movement beyond the plane of the body
8. Active horizontal adduction (supine) as tolerated

### **6 to 8 WEEKS POST-SURGERY**

1. Discontinue use of sling
2. Continue shoulder ROM exercises (passive, active-assistive and active) as needed
3. Continue active internal/external rotation exercises with rubber tubing – as strength improves, progress to free weights
  - External Rotation:** is performed lying prone with arm abducted to 90° or side-lying with the arm at the side – perform movement through available range
  - Internal Rotation:** is performed supine with the arm at the side and elbow flexed at 90°
4. Active shoulder abduction from 0° - 90°
5. Add supraspinatus strengthening exercise, if adequate ROM is available (0° - 90°) – the movement should be pain free and performed in the scapular plane (approximately 20° - 30° forward of the coronal plane)
6. Active shoulder flexion through available range-of-motion (as tolerated)

### **2 TO 3 MONTHS POST-SURGERY**

1. Continue shoulder ROM exercises (as needed) – patient should have full passive and active ROM
2. Continue isotonic exercises with emphasis on eccentric strengthening of the rotator cuff

3. Add push-ups – movement should be pain free – begin with wall push-ups – as strength improves, progress to floor push-ups (modified – hands and knees, or military – hands and feet) as tolerated
4. Add shoulder bar hang exercise to increase ROM in shoulder flexion and abduction (as needed)
5. Active horizontal abduction (prone)
6. Add strengthening exercises to the elbow and wrist joint (as necessary)
7. Upper extremity PNF patterns may be added – shoulder flexion/abduction/external rotation and extension/adduction/internal rotation diagonals are emphasized
8. Add upper body ergometer for endurance training
9. Add gentle Plyometrics

#### **4 MONTHS POST-SURGERY**

1. Add advanced capsule stretches, as necessary
2. Continue to progress isotonic exercises
3. Add military press exercise
4. Add progressive Plyometrics including stair-stepper and tilt board
5. Add pitch-back beginning with a light ball
6. Add total body conditioning program

#### **5 MONTHS POST-SURGERY**

1. Continue strengthening program – emphasis may be placed on exercising the shoulder in positions specific to the sport
2. Continue total body conditioning program with emphasis on the shoulder (rotator cuff)
3. Skill mastery – begin practicing skills specific to the activity (work, recreational activity, sports, etc.) – *for example, throwing athletes (e.g., pitchers) may proceed to throwing program*
4. May add progressive shoulder throwing program – advance through the throwing sequence, as needed