



**PT Protocol**  
**Rotator Cuff Repair, Large Tear**  
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**Phase 1: 0-6 Weeks**

**Goals**

Protect the repair, NO active ROM, ADL strategies and sling management  
Formal PT to begin 3 weeks post op

**Sling**

0-4 Weeks: Essentially full time with abduction “pillow”  
4-6 Weeks: May discontinue “pillow” and use sling as needed

**Range of Motion**

Avoid stretching of any kind for 6 weeks  
Pendulum/Codman exercises begin day 1- unless specifically restricted  
0-3 Weeks: PROM: Scaption 60 degrees, ER 15 degrees, IR as tolerated  
3-6 Weeks: PROM: Scaption 90 degrees, ER 35 degrees, IR as tolerated

**Strength**

0-3 Weeks: Begin squeeze ball, elbow, wrist and hand active movement day 1  
4-6 Weeks: Scapular retractions, shrugs  
Walking (in sling)  
Active IR, ER standing with arm at side  
Wand exercises (beginning supine), Wall walks  
Stationary bike (in sling)

**Functional Measure**

ASES Score greater than 30



## Phase 2: 6-12 Weeks

### Goals

Continue to protect repair, initiate active movement, discontinue sling, education to outline realistic expectations and slow pathway for rotator cuff surgery

### Range of Motion

Expect gradual progress through this phase  
No aggressive stretching, but may do gentle stretching and shoulder mobilization

### Strength

6-9 Weeks: Scapular retraining, retraction, protraction (supine), shrugs  
Rotator cuff, band exercises with arm at side or side lying  
Sub maximal isometrics  
Wand exercises upright when mechanics are good supine  
Blood Flow Restriction training (BFR)

9-12 Weeks: Scapular retraining progressing add I's, T's and Y's  
Rotator cuff continues may use 30 degrees of scaption as a starting point  
Wall push ups to press plus position, biceps, triceps, wrist strength  
Add core work, lower extremity strengthening

### Conditioning

Increase bike but avoid weight bearing with surgical arm  
Balance starting with single leg. Later may add perturbation

### Functional Measure

ASES score greater than 50



## Phase 3: 3-6 Months

### Goals

Advance resistance shoulder exercises, achieve full range of motion focus on posture and good scapular mechanics

### Range of Motion

Expect nearly full range by 16 weeks, but subtle deficits are normal, stretching, shoulder mobilization

### Strength

12-16 Weeks: Kneeling push ups emphasizing form, continue I's, T's and Y's

Rotator cuff, advance resistance gradually

Add rows, scapular punches,

BFR

16-24 Weeks: Continue all previous

Add dumbbell chest press

“Blade” exercises

For thrower plyometric pitch back with light ball when scapular mechanics and rotator cuff strength allow

### Conditioning

Focus on total body conditioning especially core, balance and aerobic fitness

Hand eye drills with balance (BOSU ball toss), add perturbation when ready

Supine two handed medicine ball toss and catch, after 20 weeks may do medicine ball work upright

### Functional Measure

ASES score greater than 70



## **Phase 4: After 6 Months - Return to Full Activity**

### **Goals**

Return to full activity, emphasize importance of continuing program at home, education that improvement will be seen even at 12 months

### **Strength**

Full push ups, standard upper body resistance training in gym  
Advance closed chain shoulder work from high plank position (walks, tennis ball catch and toss, alternating shoulder touches, dead bug, side plank).  
Pitch back ball weight increases

### **Criteria for Throwing Progression**

Excellent scapular mechanics  
Pitch back continuously for one minute with light ball  
2/10 on pain scale

### **Conditioning, Plyometrics and Agility**

Continue to work balance with perturbation  
Sport specific agility work, lower extremity plyometrics  
Increase endurance, core strength

### **Functional Measure**

ASES score greater than 80

### **Criteria for Return to Play**

0/10 pain at rest and with exertion  
One minute high plank alternating shoulder touches  
>95% ER and IR endurance compared to uninvolved side  
MD approval