

# **ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR**

**Advice and Exercise Leaflet**



**Nuffield  
Health**

## General Guidelines

- Please wear your **SLING** for 4-6 weeks to protect the repair whilst it is healing. You can remove your sling as soon as your comfort allows and for washing, dressing and exercises. However, try and support the weight of the arm with your good arm. Do NOT let your shoulder hang by your side.
- Only complete the exercises on this leaflet as taught by your physiotherapist and within the limits of your pain.
- For the first 3-5 weeks, you will not be able to use your arm for everyday activities. Please avoid activity where the operated arm is away from your body.
- Avoid heavy lifting for 12 weeks, although heavy manual work and heavy gardening should be avoided for 4-6months.
- Avoid heavy lifting with the other arm for 4 weeks.
- You can expect pain after the surgery, to manage this make sure to take your **regular** pain relief as prescribed, and you can also use ice on the shoulder for 20minutes regularly, as required, through the day.
- **Sleeping** can be uncomfortable in the first few weeks. Try to lie on your back with a pillow, or rolled up towel, underneath the operated arm from shoulder to elbow. If you lie on your side use a pillow underneath your arm and forearm to rest your hand on. Do not let your arm drop across you for the first 4-6 weeks.
- Avoid weight bearing through operated arm e.g. pushing self out of chair or bath until 12 weeks
- Avoid putting your hand behind your back to your back pocket for 12 weeks.

## Progress after surgery

Phase one - sling on (week 1-4): No movement except exercises. You will basically be one-handed immediately after your operation for three to five weeks. This will affect your ability to do everyday activities including dressing, bathing, shopping, eating and preparing meals. It is likely you will need someone to help you.

Phase two - regaining everyday movement (week 4-12): This starts when you have been given the go ahead by the hospital doctors or physiotherapist to start to regain muscle control and movement. You can now start using your shoulder for daily activities. To start with, these will be at, or below waist level. You can gradually return to light tasks with your arm away from your body. Always be guided by discomfort from your shoulder.

Phase three - regaining strength: After 12 weeks, you will be able to increase your activities, using your arm away from your body for heavier tasks. The exercises now have an emphasis on regaining strength and getting the maximum movement from your shoulder. At this stage, don't be frightened to start moving the arm as much as you can; gradually the movements will become less uncomfortable and you will feel the strength slowly returning. Your shoulder will continue to improve for 9-18months post surgery.

## Home Exercises

Complete the exercises as your pain allows and within the limitations explained.

You can start your exercises when your nerve block wears off

It is normal to feel aching, discomfort or stretching sensation when doing the exercises; however if you experience intense and lasting pain (more than 30 minutes) do it less forcefully and less often. If this does not help, then discuss with your physiotherapist.

Avoid lifting anything heavier than a kettle or 0.5kg; pushing, pulling or weight-bearing through your arm for the first 6 weeks.

Repeat the exercises little and often. Aim for 10-15 repetitions, 2-3 times a day.

**Posture** - Try to maintain good posture at all times; do not be tempted to slump or round your shoulders.

**Scapular Setting**—Thinking about the 2 points of your shoulder blades, imagine drawing them up and back towards each other. Hold contraction for 5 seconds.



**Neck movement** - tilting your head from side-to-side; and also turning to look over your left then right shoulder gently, to stop your neck becoming stiff.



**Elbow movement** - take the sling off and allow your elbow to fully straighten. You may find this more comfortable when the arm is supported e.g. when lying down.



Stand in front of a mirror to complete the following exercises if necessary to ensure you are keeping your shoulders level and not raising them up towards your ears.

## Flexion

Lying on your back, sitting or standing with your operated arm resting across your tummy, elbow bent to 90°. Hold the wrist of your operated arm with your other hand. Use your good hand to lift your arm up in front of you to 90° **ONLY (shoulder height)**. (If it is more comfortable completing the exercises in sitting, leave out number 3).

1.



2.



3.



## External Rotation

Lying on your back, sitting or standing. Elbow of operated arm bent to 90° and held close to the body. Gently move your hand away from your chest to rotate your shoulder. DO NOT go past neutral.



If these exercises are too difficult / painful to complete please contact the physiotherapy department.

You will have a physiotherapy appointment at 2 weeks after your surgery, where they will begin to progress your exercises.

Please do contact us if you have any problems or questions.

## Getting back to activity:

**Driving** from 6-8 weeks. As your pain and movement allow, but making sure you are safely in control of your vehicle. Left sided repairs may take longer if you have a manual car.

**Return to work:** Sedentary 5-8 weeks (as pain allows) Physical or manual jobs require longer absence of approximately 3-6 months.

**Leisure activities:** Please discuss the activities you want to do with your physiotherapist or consultant. Your level of activity will increase as your rehabilitation progresses.

Generally it is six months before you can return to non-contact sports, and 9 months to a year before returning to contact sports.

Swimming is very good for strengthening your shoulder. You can try a gentle, modified stroke at six to eight weeks and aim for free style after 12 weeks. Always be guided by pain with introducing new activities and do not push through sharp pain.

Your ability to get back to activity can be affected by your fitness, activity levels and movement before the surgery.

Unfortunately, sometimes you may find it is difficult to regain movement even though you are trying very hard. Reaching up behind your back is usually the hardest movement and last one to achieve. The aim for the surgery is to improve your ability to perform everyday life activities with less pain. You may not regain perfect movement.

Most improvement is seen in the 6-12weeks, however strength and movement can continue to improve for 18months to 2 years.

For an appointment at the  
Nuffield Health Wessex Hospital  
please telephone:

**0845 045 48 45**

If you have any problems or concerns please telephone:



It is company policy to provide credit/debit card details on arrival of appointments.

## **Nuffield Health Wessex Hospital**

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