
Arthroscopic Subacromial Decompression Physical Therapy Protocol

Phase I: Immediate Motion (Weeks 0 to 2)

Goals

- Re-establish non-painful range of motion
- Prevent muscular atrophy
- Re-establish dynamic stability
- Decrease pain and inflammation

Week 1

Exercise

- Elbow/wrist/hand exercises
 - Pendulums
 - Pulleys (flexion, scaption/abduction/internal rotation)
 - Wand exercises (flexion/external rotation at 30 to 45 degrees of abduction)
 - Isometrics
 - Rhythmic stabilization exercises (external rotation/internal rotation, flexion/extension)
- Cryotherapy and modalities for pain and inflammation every hour for 20 minutes

Week 2

Exercise

- May initiate heat prior to exercise if needed
- Continue range of motion exercises and progress as tolerated
- Progress external rotation/internal rotation at 90 degrees abduction
- Continue submaximal isometrics
- Initiate prone rowing
- Initiate external rotation/internal rotation tubing exercises (arm at side)
- Continue cryotherapy for pain management

Phase II: Intermediate (Weeks 2 to 6)

Criteria to Progress to Phase II

- Full range of motion
- Minimal pain and tenderness
- 4/5 manual muscle testing of external rotation/internal rotation/flexion

Goals

- Regain and improve muscular strength
- Normalize arthrokinematics
- Improve neuromuscular control of the shoulder complex
- Diminish pain

Weeks 2 to 3

Exercise

- Initiate isotonic strengthening program (no weight)
 - Shoulder elevation
 - Prone rowing
 - Prone horizontal abduction
 - Prone shoulder extension to neutral
 - Sidelying external rotation
 - Sidelying abduction to 90 degrees
- After one week of performing exercises with no pain and proper form, progress to one pound weight
 - Joint mobilizations
 - Initiate neuromuscular control exercises for scapula
 - Initiate trunk and lower extremity exercises
 - Initiate upper extremity endurance exercises
- Continue cryotherapy for pain management

Weeks 4 to 5

Exercise

- Progress to fundamental shoulder exercise program

Phase III: Dynamic (Weeks 6 to 12)

Criteria to Progress to Phase III

- Full, non-painful range of motion
- No pain or tenderness
- Muscular strength to 70 percent of contralateral side

Goals

- Improve strength, power and endurance
- Improve neuromuscular control
- Prepare athlete to return to sport

Weeks 6 to 8

Exercise

- Continue isotonic program-fundamental shoulder
- Progress strengthening exercises
- Continue endurance exercises
- Initiate plyometric activities (two hand drills)
 - Chest pass
 - Side to side throws

Weeks 9 to 12

Exercise

- Continue exercises as listed above
- Initiate one hand plyometric drills
 - Wall dribbles
 - Baseball throws
 - Shovel throws
- Initiate interval sports program at weeks 10 to 12

Phase IV: Return to Activity (Weeks 13 to 22)

Criteria to Progress to Phase IV

- Full, non-painful range of motion
- No pain or tenderness
- Satisfactory muscular strength
- Satisfactory clinical exam

Goals

- Progressively increase activities to prepare for full functional return

Weeks 13 to 22

Exercise

- Continue range of motion and strengthening programs
- Continue self capsular stretches as needed
- Continue fundamental shoulder exercise program
- Continue interval sports program
- Gradually return to overhead activities