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REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Elbow Dislocation (Non-Operative)

EXPECTED RETURN TO WORK

- Sedentary/Cognitive: 1–2 weeks; light manual: 4–6 weeks; heavy manual: 8–10 weeks

Phase I: 0–6 Weeks IMMEDIATE POST-OPERATIVE MAXIMUM PROTECTION PHASE

GOALS

- Protect healing joint; decrease joint effusion and soft tissue edema; decrease pain
- Active elbow flexion goal: 115 degrees; active elbow extension goal: 10 degrees short of extension
- **Precautions:** No lifting, pushing, and pulling
- **Brace:** Progress elbow brace as outlined by medical provider

PROM / AAROM

- No limitation with elbow flexion range of motion. Gradually progress to full elbow extension. No aggressive stretching into elbow extension. Pronation/supination as tolerated.
- Wrist and hand: range of motion as tolerated

STRENGTHENING

- Light putty exercises to maintain grip; scapulothoracic strengthening; isometrics in neutral position

TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS

- **Sub-max isometrics of the triceps, biceps, and brachialis while at neutral position:** These muscles enhance the compressive forces of the humeroulnar joint, reducing the humeroulnar sag (Amis, Dowson, and Wright, 1980).
- **Elbow/forearm active ROM exercises in an overhead manner while supine:** Patient lying on back with shoulder flexed to 90 degrees. This position reduces the gravitational forces distracting the humeroulnar joint and enhances joint tracking during flexion and extension of the elbow (Wolfe & Hotchkins, 2006).
- **Modalities:** As needed, including electrical stimulation, ultrasound, hot pack, and cold pack

Phase II: 6–12 Weeks MINIMAL PROTECTION PHASE

GOALS

- 5/5 strength with elbow flexion and extension; elbow flexion goal: 135 degrees; elbow extension: 0 degrees extension
- **Brace:** Discontinue based on provider restrictions



- **ROM:** AROM/PROM: no restrictions
- **Precautions:** Lifting restriction may be lifted or increased as directed by referring medical provider

STRENGTHENING

- Elbow flexion isotonic strengthening; triceps extension isotonic strengthening
- Pronation/supination isotonic strengthening; as needed: scapulothoracic strengthening, rotator cuff strengthening

TREATMENT INTERVENTIONS

- Wrist/hand exercises; gripping exercises; wall pushups progressing to standard push-up; bicep curls
- Triceps extensions; pushing, pulling, and functional lifting based on job and home requirements

Phase III: 12+ Weeks

- Functional strengthening

Time frames are guidelines — progress when phase goals are met, per Dr. Kelly and the treating therapist.