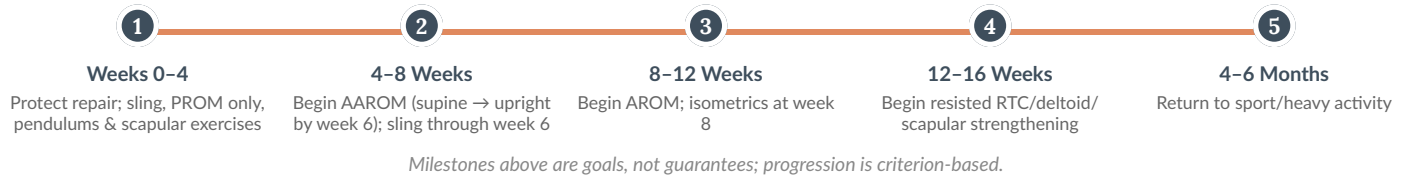


PT PROTOCOL

Rotator Cuff Repair (RTCR) – Small to Medium Tear

Rehabilitation Protocol



Phase 1 Weeks 0–4

Sling: Small-pillow sling, worn for 6 weeks. May be removed for showering and activities as directed. Must be worn in uncontrolled environments (sleeping, around children/pets/crowds) through week 6.

Range of Motion

- Passive range of motion only, within a comfortable range: forward elevation, external rotation, abduction.
- Performed by the therapist (3x/week) or a home assistant, with the patient supine.
- No active or active-assisted motion.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Pendulum exercises, twice daily.
- Scapular stabilizer exercises beginning week 1, performed in the sling: shrugs (elevation), depression, retraction, protraction – daily.
- Hand, wrist, and elbow motion, ad lib.
- Cryotherapy as needed for pain/swelling.
- Activity restrictions: no driving until the sling is off at 6 weeks; no reaching overhead until 12 weeks; no reaching behind the back, carrying objects, or pushing/pulling until 6 weeks.

Phase 2 Weeks 4–8

Sling: Continue through week 6, per Phase 1 instructions.

Range of Motion

- Active-assisted range of motion (forward elevation, external rotation, abduction), using the unaffected arm or a cane/stick.
- Supine at week 4, propped at 45° at week 5, fully upright at week 6.
- Pulleys may be added for forward elevation after week 6.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Continue pendulum exercises.
- Scapular stabilizer exercises continue in the sling through week 6, then out of the sling weeks 6–12.

Phase 3

Weeks 8–12

Range of Motion

- Active range of motion (forward elevation, external rotation, abduction), while continuing active-assisted motion.
- Avoid shoulder hiking — use a mirror or the uninvolved hand on the shoulder to monitor.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Isometric exercises beginning week 8: isometric push/pull and isometric external/internal rotation against a wall with a pillow — hold 15 seconds, rest 30 seconds, 10–15 repetitions, daily.
- Continue scapular stabilizer and active-assisted range of motion exercises.

Phase 4

Weeks 12–16

Range of Motion

- Continue progressing active range of motion toward full, pain-free motion in all planes.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Resisted rotator cuff strengthening: elastic tubing (or sidelying hand weights) for internal/external rotation — 10–15 reps, 3–4 sets, 3 days/week.
- Deltoid strengthening: resisted forward punches and pulls with tubing — 10–15 reps, 3–4 sets, 3 days/week.
- Resisted scapular strengthening: locked-elbow extension (trapezius), press-up plus (serratus), rows (band kneeling or hand weight upright) — 10–15 reps, 3–4 sets, 3 days/week.
- Shoulder stretching, daily: corner stretch (anterior); towel stretch, cross-body stretch, sleeper stretch (posterior) — hold 15 seconds, rest 15 seconds, 5 repetitions. Begin gently; more aggressive stretching may be used after week 16 if needed.
- Do not perform full-can or empty-can exercises — these place excessive stress on the rotator cuff repair.

Phase 5

Months 4–6

Range of Motion

- Full, pain-free range of motion in all planes.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Continue rotator cuff, deltoid, and scapular strengthening as tolerated.
- Continue stretching program as needed.
- Sport or heavy activity, once the therapy program is complete and cleared by the surgeon.