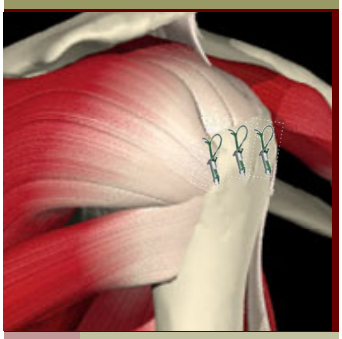
Rotator Cuff Repair



PROFESSOR GEORGE MURRELL

Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair

Rehabilitation Guidelines

Phase 1 (0 - 6 weeks)

*You will have an **Ultrasling** which needs to be worn day and night for 48 hours, then day only for 6 weeks if comfort allows.*

The aim of the sling is to take some tension off the repair.

It is not necessary to wear the waist strap on the sling.

You can remove the sling to perform the exercises gently.

You can also remove the sling to have a shower, to get dressed or when sitting quietly if comfort allows - and on those occasions the sling comes off, the arm needs to be kept slightly elevated adjacent to the body, supported on pillows or an armrest.

Durasoft *cold treatment commences and continues every 2 hours for 20 minutes regularly for the first 48 hours, and then as needed. Always keep at least one pack in the freezer.*

12 to 16 Hours

Local Anaesthetic Block

Moving your upper limb voluntarily is not possible until the block begins to wear off.
As the block begins to wear off, it is advisable to begin taking the pain killers prescribed for you (eg panadeine forte).

ACTIVITIES

You should able to drive in 2-3 weeks.

RESTRICTIONS

No lifting or overhead work.

Day 1 until 6 weeks

Repeat the following exercises 3 times per day. Take pain relief medication about 30 minutes before you start the exercises if required.
Some clicking in the shoulder or pain during or immediately after exercise may be experienced with these exercises.

- **Elbow Flexion and Extension**

  Take off the sling. This can be done in sitting or when lying on your back. With the palm of the operated arm up, gently bend and straighten the elbow as far as possible.

  Repeat 10 reps, 3x/day

Elbow Flexion / Extension

- **Grip Strengthening**

  This exercise can be done whilst the sling is on or off. Grip the rubber ball and squeeze, hold for five seconds and release.

  Hold 5 secs, Repeat 10 reps, 3x/day

Grip Strengthening

- **Scapula Strengthening**

  This exercise can be done whilst the sling is on or off. Depress your shoulders and simultaneously pinch your shoulder blades back together, hold for ten seconds and release.

  Hold 10 secs, Repeat 10 reps, 3x/day

Scapula Strength-

- **Pendular Reach**

  Bend at your waist and rest with your good arm on a steady surface, eg a table, so that your operated arm is dangling in front of your body in a relaxed position.

  Swing the operated arm in a *clockwise direction* for 1 minute making the circles larger during this time as comfort allows.

  Repeat by swinging the arm in an *anticlockwise direction* for a further 1 minute, again making the circles larger each time only as comfort allows.

  Clockwise 1min, Anticlockwise 1min, 3x/day

Pendular Reach

What To Expect...

The pain is often worse at night, especially the first few nights.

Don't forget to use the ice pack, and your pain relief medication.

Some patients find it more comfortable to sleep a little more vertical, for instance in a recliner.

It is common to get swelling about the arm, forearm, hand and fingers for the first 6 weeks.

You are not permitted to actively move your operated shoulder or lift any weight for the first 6 weeks. You are not allowed to perform any overhead activity for the first 12 weeks.

Contact our rooms if:
- you experience drainage or odour from the wound
- increased pain unrelieved with pain medication
- sudden, severe pain
- increased redness around the incision
- persistent fever above 38°C

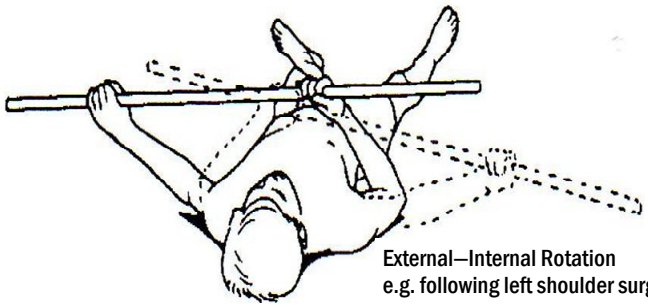
Day 2 until 6 weeks

- **External-Internal Rotation**

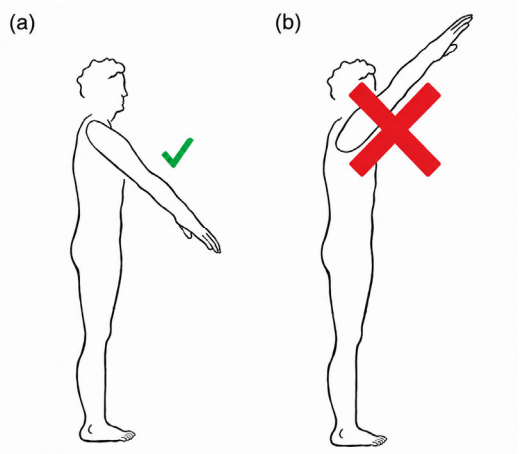
  Lying on your back. Hold stick with *good hand in under grip* and *operated hand in a top grip*. Keep elbows bent at 90°.

  Using your good hand, *gently* push the stick towards the operated side of your body, making sure you keep the elbow at 90° and close to your side.

  Hold 5secs, 10 reps, 3x/day



External—Internal Rotation
e.g. following left shoulder surgery



- **Shoulder Flexion**

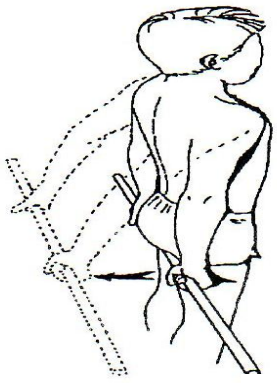
  Be very carful lifting your arm. We now know if you have too much shoulder motion at 6 weeks, the rotator cuff is more likely to retear. We want the shoulder to be a little stiff. As much as possible keep everything at waist level.

Day 7 until 6 weeks

- **Shoulder Extension**

  Hold the stick using an *underhand* grip behind your back. Push the stick backwards away from your body as comfort allows.

  Hold 5secs, 10 reps, 3x/day



Shoulder Extension

Day 8 - Post-Op Visit

Post-Op Visit

- Your post-operative appointment should be around Day 8, a Wednesday, at 12pm, at The Church, 17 Kensington Street, Kogarah.

At your Post-Op Visit we will:

- Remove your bulky dressing.
- Take out your stitches.
- Review your operation with you.

You can now:

- Get your shoulder wet.
- Continue Phase 1 exercises.

The tendon takes at least 6 weeks to heal into the bone, enough to allow you to move the arm actively at 6 weeks; and up to 12months to fully and solidly heal to bone, so use the ultrasling and no overhead activities or lifting for six weeks

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Other Milestones...

6 WEEKS

- 6 week ultrasound and post-operative physio check up with us.
- No sling and commence Phase 2 exercises.
- Lifting up to 0.5 kg below chest level.
- No overhead activities except when you perform our prescribed exercises.

3 MONTHS

- 12 week ultrasound and post-operative physio check up with us.
- Commence Phase 3 exercises with use of yellow theraband.
- Commence light lifting close to your body up to 1 kg depending on progress and the repair. Our 12 week physio review will instruct you on the lifting progressions.
- Occasional light overhead work of less than 15minutes duration.
- Light breast stroke swimming may be permitted at 4 to 6 months depending on progress.

6 MONTHS

- Final visit with Professor Murrell.
- Ultrasound scan with our sonographer to check the repair.
- Return to full work duties and sports if final clearance obtained from Prof Murrell.