

# Rotator Cuff Repair – Rehabilitation Guidelines

## *Kelowna Bone and Joint Health*

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### **0 to 6 Weeks Post-op**

- Sling use:
  - Rest in sling when up, and use sling loosely applied for sleep
  - When seated, loosen the strap off your neck and allow the arm to rest on your lap. The critical point is to keep the shoulder muscles loose and relaxed
  - May come out of the sling for showering, changing and exercises. Allow the elbow to straighten fully when out of the sling. Keep the shoulder muscles loose, and allow arm to dangle along with 'bad posture' for washing under arm
- To improve tendon healing rates:
  - No smoking
  - No anti-inflammatory medications (such as Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Naprosyn, Celebrex, Voltaren, Diclofenac)
    - Plain Tylenol, Tylenol #3, Tramacet, Percocet/Oxycocet/oxycodone, hydromorphone/Dilaudid and other opioids do not affect healing
- Shoulder motion exercises are usually very limited, and often no shoulder exercise at all for several weeks. Only start motion exercises as per your surgeon's instructions, and the surgeon will go over this in detail at the first post-operative visit.

### **After 6 Weeks Post-op**

- Wean from sling
- Start to use the arm for light, unresisted daily activities (wash hair, brush teeth, feeding etc). Start first with waist level activities, and gradually begin reaching and moving arm away from the body as pain and comfort permit
- Become a 'two-handed' person again for light activities, but do not lift any heavy objects, and no pushing or pulling activities.
- Avoid any activity which causes lasting pain (a stretching sensation or 'work-out feeling' after shoulder exercises is fine)
- Start Physiotherapy:
  - Progress your exercise program for motion as the physiotherapist advises
  - Start a strengthening program as directed by the physiotherapist (directions will be given to the physiotherapist – strengthening typically begins between 10 and 12 weeks after surgery depending on the tear size and other factors)

### **After 6 months**

- Gradually and slowly return to all activities as pain and comfort allows
- Avoid lasting pain with activities
- Continue with a home exercise program
- Expect at least another 6 months before achieving maximal recovery of motion, pain relief and strength