

POST-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Posterior Shoulder Stabilization

William McLaughlin, MD | Sports Medicine Surgery | Advanced Bone & Joint

Phase 1 | 0-4 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Protect the posterior capsule repair with abduction or external rotation brace x 4 weeks.
- Maintain elbow, wrist, hand ROM and grip strength.
- Begin Codman's exercises.

Immobilization

- Abduction or external rotation brace x 4 weeks.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Grip strength.
- Elbow/wrist/hand ROM.
- Codman's exercises.

Phase 2 | 4-6 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Discontinue brace at 4 weeks unless otherwise indicated.
- Begin passive → AAROM → AROM with FF restricted to 90° and ER at side to tolerance.
- Initiate isometric exercises and scapular stabilizer strengthening.

Immobilization

- Discontinue brace at 4 weeks unless otherwise indicated.

Range of Motion

- Begin passive → AAROM → AROM.
- Restrict FF to 90°.
- ER at side to tolerance.
- IR to stomach.
- No cross-body adduction.
- No manipulations per therapist.

Strengthening

- Begin isometric exercises with arm at side: deltoid/scapular.
- ER/IR (submaximal) with arm at side.
- Begin strengthening scapular stabilizers.

Phase 3 | Progression

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Increase ROM to within 20° of opposite side.
- Continue isometrics; encourage daily ROM home program.
- Once FF to 140°, advance strengthening (isometrics → bands → light weights 1-5 lbs).
- Limit strengthening to 3x/week to avoid rotator cuff tendonitis.
- Begin closed-chain exercises.

Range of Motion

- Increase ROM to within 20° of opposite side.
- No manipulations per therapist.
- Encourage patient to work on ROM daily.

Strengthening

- Continue isometrics.
- Once FF to 140°, advance strengthening as tolerated: isometrics → bands → light weights (1-5 lbs); 8-12 reps / 2-3 sets per rotator cuff, deltoid, and scapular stabilizers.
- Strengthening 3x/week to avoid rotator cuff tendonitis.
- Closed-chain exercises.

Phase 4 | 3-12 Months

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Advance to full painless ROM.
- Begin eccentrically resisted motions, plyometrics, and proprioception drills.
- Initiate sports-related rehab at 3 months.
- Return to throwing at 4 months; pitcher's mound at 6 months.
- MMI usually at 12 months.

Range of Motion

- Advance to full painless ROM.

Advanced Strengthening

- Begin eccentrically resisted motions.
- Plyometrics (e.g., weighted ball toss).
- Proprioception (e.g., body blade).
- Closed-chain exercises at 12 weeks.

Return to Sport Milestones

- Sports-related rehab at 3 months, including advanced conditioning.
- Return to throwing at 4 months.
- Throw from pitcher's mound at 6 months.
- MMI usually at 12 months.

This protocol is a general guideline. Progression is patient-specific and at the discretion of William McLaughlin, MD.