

POST-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

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

Phase 1 | 0-2 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Sling for comfort as needed.
- Protect the repair — no formal therapy yet.
- Grip strengthening may begin immediately.

Immobilization

- Sling as needed for comfort.

Range of Motion

- No formal range of motion exercises during this phase; formal outpatient therapy begins at 2 weeks post-operatively.

Strengthening

- Grip strengthening may begin immediately.

Phase 2 | 2-6 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Begin formal outpatient therapy at 2 weeks.
- Progress passive → active-assisted → active range of motion.
- 6-week goal: 120° active forward elevation / 30° active external rotation.
- No internal rotation this phase.
- Limit weight-bearing through the operative arm to 5 lbs.

Range of Motion

- Start formal therapy at 2 weeks post-operatively.
- Begin passive range of motion, progressing to active-assisted and then active range of motion.
- Goal: 120° active forward elevation and 30° active external rotation by 6 weeks post-operatively.
- Home exercise program progression:
 - Pendulums.
 - Pulleys.
 - Supine active flexion.
 - Wall climbs and upright active elevation.
- No internal rotation for the first 6 weeks post-operatively; otherwise no restrictions.

Strengthening

- Continue grip strengthening.
- No shoulder strengthening during this phase.
- Limit weight-bearing through the operative arm to 5 lbs from 2-6 weeks post-operatively.

Modalities

- Heat before therapy, ice after.

Phase 3 | 6-12 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Begin shoulder strengthening program.
- Closed-chain deltoid, eccentric external rotator, and scapular stabilizer exercises.
- No resistance bands or weights yet.

Range of Motion

- Continue advancing active range of motion as tolerated.

Strengthening

- Begin closed-chain concentric anterior deltoid exercises.
- Begin open-chain eccentric external rotator exercises.
- Begin scapular stabilizer exercises.
- No resistance bands or weights until 3 months post-operatively.

Phase 4 | 12 Weeks and Beyond

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Add resisted internal rotation exercises at 12 weeks.
- Progress to resistance bands and weights at 3 months.
- Light athletic activity at 3 months, higher-level activity at 4 months.

Strengthening

- Resisted internal rotation exercises may begin at 12 weeks post-operatively.
- Resistance bands and weights may be introduced at 3 months post-operatively.

Return to Activity Milestones

- Light athletic activities (swimming, water aerobics, tennis, jogging) at 3 months post-operatively.
- Higher-level activities (golf, weight training) at 4 months post-operatively.

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