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## Rotator Cuff Tendon Repair

*Updated March 2020*

### SLING:

- At all times for 2-6 weeks. You will be told when you can take it off at your follow-up appointment.
- When dressing, put your operative arm in the sleeve first. When getting undressed, take your operative arm out last. Loose fitting, button-down shirts are recommended.

### PHYSICAL THERAPY:

- Start formal physical therapy after 4-6 weeks (you will receive further instructions at your follow-up visit).
- Do the below listed exercises as tolerated, before physiotherapy starts.

### WOUND CARE:

#### **Bandages:**

- On post op day 3 you can remove your dressing. Leave white strips in place, if you have them. You may cover the incisions with new bandages.

#### **Shower:**

- You may shower at post-op day 3 once your bandages are off.
- After bandages have been removed you may shower without covering incision sites, keep out of direct spray from water and pat dry. Keep white strips on incision, they may fall off in the shower.
- You may take your sling off to shower, keeping arm across chest. You may bend forward at the waist, letting arm hang down to clean under your arm.
- **NO soaking in bathtub/hot tub or pool for first 2-3 weeks and scabs have fallen off.**

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION:

- Excessive or worsening pain, increased redness around the incision sites, drainage from incisions that looks like pus and/or is foul smelling, if fever runs above 38.5°C.
- If any of the above symptoms occur call Central Alberta Orthopedics at 403-309-2001 or go to the emergency department right away

### CONTROL OF PAIN AND SWELLING

#### **Pain Medication:**

- For the first few days take your pain medication regularly as instructed, then wean as tolerated. Avoid taking pain medications on an empty stomach, as it can make you nauseous.
- Wean yourself off of Percocet/Tramacet to Extra Strength Tylenol (acetaminophen) by **Day 5** after surgery.

#### **Cold Therapy:**

- If you have a cold therapy machine, use it as much as possible, as per the device instructions.
- If you don't have cold therapy machine, you can remove outer bandage to ice for 20-30 minutes, at least four times for several days. Use more frequently as needed. It will help in reducing pain. Avoid placing ice directly on bare skin to prevent frostbite and give a break of 30 minutes in between sessions.

#### **Sleeping:**

- It will help if you sleep with pillows behind your back and shoulder. Some patients find it helpful to sleep in a recliner.

### PREVENTING BLOOD CLOTS

- Make sure you get up and walk around as much as possible; mobilizing prevents clots.
- Take the blood thinner your surgeon prescribed.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Blood Clots:**

- Severe and worsening pain and swelling in calf muscle.
- If any of the above symptoms occur call Health Link at 8-1-1 or go to the emergency department right away.

### POST OPERATIVE EXERCISES (MAY START 1<sup>ST</sup> DAY AFTER SURGERY):

#### **Elbow Range of Motion**

**\*\*if you had a biceps tendon repair, use other arm to help perform the motion, do not actively lift or hold anything in the operative arm.\*\***

- Take arm out of sling. With elbow bent at 90°, bend and straighten elbow as though brushing something off the front of you. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.

#### **Grip Strengthening**

- Make tight fist. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.

#### **Scapular retraction**

- Stand with arms at side. Pinch shoulder blades together, as if trying to get them to touch in the middle.
- Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 30 times, 3 times per day.

### EXPECTED RECOVERY:

- Return to school/desk type work approximately 4-5 days following surgery.
- Return to use of shoulder for typical household chores by 6-8 weeks after surgery.
- Return to heavy occupational/laborer activities or sports by approximately 3-6 months.

### DRIVING

- No driving while you are required to wear your sling.
- You may return to driving a vehicle (non-commercial) when you are no longer affected by pain, no longer wearing your sling, under the influence of pain medications, able to **fully weight bear on your surgical arm**, and are confident that you can react appropriately in an emergency.

**Due to the anesthetic, for the next 24 hours: Do NOT drive, sign legal documents, provide child care on your own or consume alcohol.**