

Rehabilitation Protocol: Distal Biceps Tendon Repair

Date of Surgery: _____

Repair: ☐ Primary Repair ☐ Chronic/Augmented Reconstruction

Protect the repair: No active elbow flexion/supination until 6 weeks and no resisted flexion/supination until 10 weeks. Do not force extension ROM. No lifting with the operative arm. Please contact our office with any questions or concerns.

☐ **Phase I – Immobilization (Weeks 0–2)**

- **Immobilization:** Posterior splint at 90° with forearm neutral for 7–10 days; then hinged ROM brace set at **45° to full flexion**
- **Therapeutic Exercises**
 - Shoulder ROM (avoid extension beyond neutral); wrist and hand AROM (no active supination)
 - PROM elbow from 90° to full flexion
 - Scapular protraction, retraction, depression; postural awareness
- **Criteria to Progress:** Decreasing pain at rest; independent with brace

☐ **Phase II – Protected Motion (Weeks 2–6)**

- **Brace (extension limit):** **Weeks 2–3: 45° to full flexion; week 4: 30°; week 5: 20°; week 6: 10°** to full flexion, with full supination/pronation at week 6
- **Range of Motion – Weeks 3–5:** PROM elbow flexion and supination; AAROM elbow extension and pronation (elbow at 90°). Do not force extension
- **Therapeutic Exercises**
 - **Weeks 2–3:** Triceps and shoulder isometrics (abduction, IR, ER, extension)
 - Scaption; prone row and prone extension
 - Scar mobilization once healed; edema management
- **Criteria to Progress:** No pain at rest; elbow PROM 10° to full flexion

☐ **Phase III – Active Motion (Weeks 6–12)**

- **Brace:** Discontinue at 6–8 weeks with adequate motor control
- **Range of Motion – Weeks 6–8:** AAROM elbow flexion. **Week 8:** full elbow ROM and full supination/pronation. **Week 9:** AROM elbow flexion (no resistance)
- **Therapeutic Exercises**
 - Restore full shoulder mobility; wall slides; wrist and hand PREs
 - **Week 8:** Shoulder isotonic; continue triceps strengthening
 - **Week 10:** PREs for elbow flexion and supination/pronation, starting at 1 lb and progressing gradually; avoid resisted combined flexion and supination early
 - **Weeks 10–12:** UBE
- **Criteria to Progress:** Full UE ROM; no increase in pain or swelling after activity

☐ **Phase IV – Strengthening (Weeks 12–20)**

- **Therapeutic Exercises**
 - Progress scapular, shoulder, elbow, forearm, and wrist strengthening; serratus activation (supine punch, dynamic hugs)
 - **Week 14:** Light weight training (e.g., bench press, shoulder press, dumbbell press)
 - Closed chain/push-up progression and plyometric progression after week 14 as tolerated
- **Criteria to Progress:** Pain-free at rest and with exercise; full shoulder and elbow ROM; UE strength 5/5

☐ **Phase V – Return to Activity (Week 20+)**

- **Return to Sport/Work:** Gradual progression of upper body weightlifting and sport-specific activity; pain-free with all activities; adequate strength; physician clearance