



## Adam J. Farber, MD

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### Post-Operative Physical Therapy Protocol for AC Joint Reconstruction

#### **Precautions:**

DO NOT let weight of arm pull on shoulder for the first 6 weeks after surgery

NO PENDULUM EXERCISES for the first 6 weeks after surgery

DO NOT elevate surgical arm above 90° in any plane for the first 6 weeks after surgery

DO NOT lift any objects over 3 pounds with the surgical arm for the first 6 weeks after surgery

Avoid excessive reaching as well as internal rotation and external rotation for the first 6 weeks after surgery

#### **Recommendations:**

Ice the shoulder 3-5 times per day for 20 minutes to control swelling and inflammation

Wear the sling at ALL times when standing or sleeping for the first 6 weeks after surgery

Keep incision clean and dry for the first 2 weeks after surgery

#### **Days 1 to 14:**

Sling

Elbow/hand gripping and ROM exercises

- Perform 4-6 times per day

Begin gentle passive shoulder internal and external rotation exercises

Cryotherapy for pain and inflammation

- Ice 15-20 min approximately 4-6 times daily

Sleeping

- Sleep in sling

Weeks 2-4:

Sling except when doing exercises with physical therapy

Begin gentle passive and active-assisted shoulder range of motion.

- Do not exceed 90° of forward flexion or abduction
- No active range of motion
- No lifting or strengthening activities

Sleeping

- Sleep in sling

Weeks 4-6:

Sling except when doing exercises with physical therapy

PT: Increase range of motion

- Do NOT exceed 90° of forward flexion and abduction
- No active range of motion
- No lifting or strengthening activities

Sleeping

- Sleep in sling

Weeks 6-12:

May discontinue use of sling

PT: Attempt to achieve full range of motion in all planes

- May begin active range of motion
- No lifting or strengthening activities

Weeks 12-18:

PT: Continue to seek full range of motion in all planes  
May begin isometric strengthening exercises

Weeks 18-24:

PT: Continue to seek full range of motion in all planes  
May begin progressive resistance exercises with weights as tolerated

Goal is to return to sporting activities at 6 months