



## REHABILITATION GUIDELINES

### **DISTAL TRICEPS REPAIR**

**Edward S. Chang, MD**  
Orthopaedics and  
Sports Medicine

#### **OFFICE LOCATIONS**

**TUESDAY**  
8100 Innovation Park  
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**WEDNESDAY**  
1005 N. Glebe Rd  
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**THURSDAY**  
**FRIDAY (AM only)**  
6355 Walker Lane  
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Alexandria, VA 22310  
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#### **CLINICAL NURSE**

Eileen Perri, BSN  
(703) 797-6918

The rehabilitation guidelines are presented in a criterion based progression program. General time frames are given for reference to the average, but individual patients will progress at different rates depending on their age, associated injuries, pre-injury health status, rehab compliance, tissue quality and injury severity. Specific time frames, restrictions and precautions may also be given to protect healing tissues and the surgical repair/reconstruction.

#### **INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

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#### **PHASE I: WEEKS 0-2**

##### **Initial Post-operative Immobilization:**

- The patient is maintained in a posterior arm splint with elbow immobilization at 90 degrees, forearm is in neutral position until the first post-op visit (2 weeks after surgery).

##### **Hinged Elbow Brace:**

- An unlocked hinged ROM elbow brace set at 90 degrees of flexion and full extension is applied during the first post-op visit. This brace will be worn for 8 weeks from date of surgery.

##### **Clinical Goals:**

- Maintain minimal swelling and soft tissue healing
- Elbow ROM from full extension to 90 degrees of flexion increase as directed below.
- Achieve full forearm supination and pronation

#### **PHASE II: Weeks 3-8**

##### **Exercises Week 3-8:**

- **Assisted** ROM for elbow flexion and supination (with elbow in full extension)
  - **Week 3 - Full extension to 45 degrees of flexion**
  - **Week 4 - Full extension to 60 degrees of flexion**
  - **Week 5 – Full extension to 80 degrees of flexion**
  - **Week 6 – Full extension to 90 degrees of flexion**
  - **Week 7 – Full extension to 115 degrees of flexion**
  - **Week 8 – Full extension to 125 degrees of flexion**



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- **Passive** ROM for elbow extension and pronation (with elbow in full extension)
  - Shoulder ROM as needed based on evaluation avoiding excessive flexion.
  - Ice after exercise

#### **Clinical Goals:**

- Elbow flexion to 125 degrees and forearm ROM by 8 weeks
- Full passive extension ROM from 125 degrees of flexion

#### **Testing:**

- Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM
- Grip strength at 6-8 weeks

#### **Exercises Week 5:**

- **Active** flexion limit changed to 60 degrees. **Passive** extension may be increased to full extension as tolerated. The brace stays on at all times except when bathing or exercising.
- **Active** wrist flexion/extension
- **Active** ROM of hand in neutral position
- Supination/pronation through pain-free range

#### **Exercises Week 6:**

- **Active** flexion limit changed to 80 degrees
- Continue same exercises
- Putty may be used to 3 times per day to improve grip strength
- Ladder with arm supported by unaffected extremity
- Gentle pulley while limiting elbow flexion to -90 degrees

#### **Exercises Week 7:**

- **Active** flexion limit changed to 90 degrees.
- Supine scapula stabilization with **no weight**
- Biceps specific exercises

#### **Exercises Week 8:**

- **Active** flexion limit changed to 115 degrees.
- At the end of 8 weeks and **after evaluation by the physician** the brace may be discontinued
- **Passive** elbow flexion exercises may be started if needed
- Light strengthening exercises are started with light tubing or 1-kg weights for elbow flexion, extension, forearm rotation and wrist flexion and extension

#### **PHASE III: 9 WEEKS TO 6 MONTHS POST-OP**

- Goals for Discharge: Full strength of triceps, shoulder musculature
- Gradual weight/theraband resistance training for triceps tendon
- Closed chain and co-contraction shoulder strengthening