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Rehabilitation Protocol: Distal Biceps Repair

Phase I: 0-2 weeks after surgery

Weight Bearing: Non-Weight Bearing

Splint: Maintain for 7-10 days

Range of Motion (ROM):

- In splint at 90 degrees
- May begin passive pronation/supination immediately post op

Phase II: 2-6 weeks after surgery

Weight Bearing: No lifting with operative extremity

Splint: Removed at first postoperative visit

Brace: Recommended for protected ROM

Range of Motion:

- Active elbow extension/pronation
 - Progress extension by 15° per week with goal of 0° by week 6
- Passive elbow flexion/supination
 - Progressive passive flexion with goal of full flexion by week 6

Therapeutic Exercises

- Elbow range of motion as prescribed
- Hand/wrist range of motion and edema control
- Scapular retraction/protraction/elevation/depression
- Gravity-assisted flexion and extension
- Cardiovascular fitness (treadmill walking, elliptical without arm use, bike)

Criteria to Progress

- Contraindication to progression of the protocol includes persistent or recurrent pain and/or swelling

Phase III: 6-10 weeks after surgery

Weight Bearing: No lifting with operative extremity until week 8

- Begin gradual weight bearing with elbow flexed at Week 8
- Progress to extended elbow by Week 10

Brace: Wean out, may continue to wear if desired

Range of Motion

- Progress to full/painless
- No active elbow flexion or supination

Therapeutic Exercises

- Isometric triceps exercises
- Isotonic triceps exercises
- Strengthening of wrist flexors and extensors (begin week 8)
- Postural control exercises
- Scapular retraction/protraction
- Cardiovascular fitness (treadmill walking, elliptical without arm use, bike)

Criteria to Progress

- Full, painless range of motion of the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand
- Proper scapulothoracic mechanics (no dyskinesia)

Phase IV: 10-16 weeks after surgery

Therapeutic Exercises

- Isometric biceps exercises
- Light isotonic biceps exercises (begin at week 16)
 - Hammer
 - Traditional

- Reverse grip
- Rotator cuff and periscapular stabilization exercises
 - Open and Closed Kinetic Chain
- Cardiovascular fitness (treadmill walking, elliptical with or without arms, bike)

Criteria to Progress

- Full, painless range of motion of the shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand
- Proper scapulothoracic mechanics (no dyskinesia)
- Full biceps strength against gravity (5/5 manual muscle test)

Phase V: 16+ weeks after surgery

Precautions: None

Therapeutic Exercises

- Biceps curls
 - Hammer
 - Traditional
 - Reverse
 - Side Curls
- Triceps extensions
- Rotator cuff and periscapular strengthening exercises
- Sport-specific exercises
- Cardiovascular fitness (treadmill walking, elliptical with or without arms, bike)

Criteria to Progress

- Functional / Sport Testing for discharge to maintenance program

References:

Logan CA, Shahien A, Haber D, Foster Z, Farrington A, Provencher MT. REHABILITATION FOLLOWING DISTAL BICEPS REPAIR. Int J Sports Phys Ther. 2019 Apr;14(2):308-317. PMID: 30997282; PMCID: PMC6449020.