

Reverse Shoulder Arthroplasty (Traditional)

Physical Therapy Protocol

Phase I – Immediate Post-Op (0–3 Weeks)

Goals:

- Protect surgical repair
- Reduce swelling, minimize pain
- Maintain UE ROM in elbow, hand and wrist
- Gradually increase shoulder PROM
- Minimize muscle inhibition
- Patient education

Precautions:

- Sling in neutral rotation with abduction pillow (30–45°); use at night
- No shoulder AROM or AAROM
- No PROM into internal rotation
- No reaching behind back
- No lifting of objects
- No weight-bearing through arms
- Pillow/towel under elbow when supine

Therapeutic Exercises:

- PROM: ER to tolerance in scapular plane, Flex/Scaption $\leq 120^\circ$, ABD $\leq 90^\circ$,
Table slides, Pendulums
- AROM: Elbow, wrist, hand

Criteria to Progress:

- Gradual increase in PROM
- 0° PROM into IR
- Pain < 4/10
- No complications with Phase I

Phase II – Intermediate Post-Op (Weeks 4–6)

Goals:

- Continue to protect surgical repair
- Reduce swelling, minimize pain
- Gradually increase shoulder PROM
- Initiate shoulder AAROM/AROM
- Initiate periscapular and deltoid activation
- Patient education

Precautions:

- Use sling at night; begin daytime weaning
- No reaching behind back or internal rotation
- No lifting > coffee cup
- No weight-bearing through arms
- Avoid shoulder hyperextension

Therapeutic Exercises:

- AAROM: Cane flexion/ER, washcloth press, seated elevation with cane
- AROM: Supine flexion, salutes, supine punches
- Strengthening: Scapular retraction, setting, low rows, deltoid isometrics in scapular plane

Criteria to Progress:

- Gradual increase in PROM/AAROM/AROM

- 0° PROM into IR
- Palpable scapular muscle activation
- Pain < 4/10
- No complications with Phase II

Phase III – Intermediate Post-Op Continued (Weeks 7–8)

Goals:

- Minimize pain
- Progress PROM including IR
- Advance AAROM and AROM
- Progress deltoid and periscapular strength
- Initiate motor control exercises
- Patient education

Precautions:

- Discontinue sling
- No reaching behind back beyond pant pocket
- No lifting > coffee cup
- No weight-bearing through arms
- Avoid shoulder hyperextension

Therapeutic Exercises:

- PROM: Full in all planes, IR $\leq 50^\circ$ in scapular plane
- AAROM: Incline table slides, wall climbs, pulleys
- AROM: Scaption, flexion, resisted elevation
- Strengthening: Physioball rows, serratus punches, cane active lowering
- Motor Control: Rhythmic stabilization (IR/ER, Flex $90-125^\circ$), supine
- Stretching: Sidelying horizontal ADD, triceps, lats

Criteria to Progress:

- Elevation $\leq 140^\circ$

- ER $\leq 30^\circ$ neutral, IR $\leq 50^\circ$ scapular/back pocket
- Minimal substitution patterns
- Pain < 4/10

Phase IV – Transitional Post-Op (Weeks 9–11)

Goals:

- Maintain pain-free ROM
- Advance deltoid and periscapular strengthening
- Enhance motor control and dynamic stability
- Gradually restore endurance
- Return to full function

Precautions:

- No lifting >10 lbs

Therapeutic Exercises:

- Strengthening: Band rows, extensions, lawnmowers, robbery, tripod, pointer
- Motor Control: Ball wall stabilization, field goals, PNF D1/D2 lifts

Criteria to Progress:

- Symmetric scapular mechanics
- Pain < 2/10

Phase V – Advanced Strengthening (Weeks 12–16)

Goals:

- Maintain pain-free ROM
- Initiate RTC strengthening with a concomitant repair
- Improve shoulder strength and endurance

- Enhance functional use of upper extremity

Precautions:

- No lifting of objects (>15 lbs)

Therapeutic Exercises:

- Periscapular: Push-up plus on knees, “W” exercise, resistance band Ws, prone shoulder extension Is, dynamic hug, resistance band dynamic hug, resistance band forward punch, forward punch, T and Y
- Deltoid: Continue gradually increasing resisted flexion and scaption in functional positions
- Elbow: Bicep curl, resistance band bicep curls, and triceps
- Rotator cuff: Internal/external rotation isometrics, side-lying external rotation, standing ER/IR with resistance band, standing ABD
- Motor Control: Resistance band PNF pattern, PNF – D1/D2 lifts with resistance, diagonal-up, diagonal-down, wall slides with resistance band

Criteria to Progress:

- Clearance from MD and ALL milestone criteria met
- Maintains pain-free PROM and AROM
- Performs all exercises demonstrating symmetric scapular mechanics
- QuickDASH
- PENN