

Proximal Humerus Fracture: Non-Surgical Physical Therapy Protocol

Initial Precautions

- **Range of Motion:** Limitation of 0–90° for the first 6 weeks. Start progressing range of motion 10 to 15 degrees per week, with a goal of full range of motion by 10 weeks.
- **Weight-Bearing Status:** Toe-touch weight-bearing until the 6-week appointment. Progress weight-bearing by approximately 25% per week after that.

Phase 1: Immobilization and Initial Exercises (0 to 3 Weeks)

Goals:

- Protect fracture site and allow initial healing.
- Control pain and swelling.

Immobilization:

- Sling worn continuously for 2–3 weeks.
- Sleeping in a preferred sitting position if comfortable.

Therapeutic Exercise:

- Pendulum exercises as pain allows.
- Active hand and forearm exercises.
- Begin isometric exercises for the shoulder girdle and scapular stabilizers.

Precautions:

- Avoid external rotation for the first 6 weeks.

Phase 2: Active Assisted Range of Motion (Weeks 3 to 9)

Goals:

- Progress ROM.
- Promote fracture consolidation.

Active Assisted Exercises:

- Begin active-assisted flexion and abduction as comfort allows.
- Gradually reduce assistance starting at week 6.

Functional Milestones:

- Gradual return to basic ADLs (e.g., dressing, light lifting) starting at week 6 as tolerated.

Special Considerations:

- X-ray evaluation to confirm healing before progressing.

Phase 3: Strengthening and Progression (Week 9 and Beyond)

Goals:

- Strengthen shoulder muscles.
- Regain full function.

Therapeutic Exercise:

- Begin isotonic strengthening exercises (concentric and eccentric).
- Use elastics and resistance machines for strengthening.

Functional Milestones:

- Gradual return to basic daily tasks (light lifting, reaching overhead) starting at weeks 9–12.
- Avoid strenuous activities until cleared for higher-level movements.

Red Flags:

- Report pain, swelling, or instability that worsens.
- Monitor for joint instability (clicking or grinding).

Special Considerations:

- Avoid overhead activities and lifting >5–10 lbs until cleared for full functional use.

Additional Considerations

Wrist Fracture Modifications:

- Gentle weight-bearing as tolerated for the wrist after 6 weeks of healing, in a brace if needed.
- Wear brace for lifting over 5 lbs.