

Physical Therapy Protocol: Nonoperative Treatment of Posterior Labrum Tear

Phase 1: Weeks 0 through 4 – Motion Recovery

Physician Goals: Avoid stressing the posterior labrum to allow shoulder pain and inflammation to resolve; regain normal range of motion; avoid weight bearing through the shoulder with the arm in forward elevation (plank, pushup, bench press positions), minimize horizontal adduction (arm across the body) as much as possible

Exercises: Passive stretching for forward elevation and external rotation without restrictions; avoid cross body adduction past neutral or internal rotation beyond 20°, no posterior or posterior inferior capsule stretching (sleeper stretch); aggressive rotator cuff strengthening with emphasis on subscapularis and infraspinatus/teres minor; scapular stabilizer strengthening in the prone position (I/Y/T/A exercises)

Comments: No restrictions on cardio such as jogging, elliptical, bike (in saddle only), no restrictions on lower body weight training; educate the patient on the importance of avoiding activities or motions that irritate the shoulder during this early period to allow pain and inflammation to subside

Total Visits: 18 – Two to three times per week with daily home stretching

Phase 2: Weeks 5 through 8 – Motion Recovery

Physician Goals: Gradually reintroduce cross body adduction and internal rotation

Exercises: Passive stretching in all planes, including posterior inferior capsule stretching (sleeper stretch) without restrictions; continue rotator cuff strengthening with emphasis on subscapularis and infraspinatus/teres minor; scapular stabilizer strengthening in the prone position (I/Y/T/A exercises) and transition to upright strengthening if symptom free

Comments: Continue to avoid weight bearing through the shoulder in forward elevation (no planks, bench press, military press, pushups)

Total Visits: 18 – Two to three times per week with daily home stretching

Phase 3: Weeks 9 through 12+ – Strength Recovery

Physician Goals: Regain normal function of the shoulder beginning with activities of daily living and progressing to all activities without restrictions

Exercises: Continue passive stretching and joint mobilization as needed to regain/maintain full range of motion in all planes, continue strengthening scapular stabilizers, initiate throwers ten / advanced throwers 10 and progress light hand weights or bands as tolerated, increase weight/resistance when 30 repetitions are easy and painless; two hand plyometrics beginning at 12 weeks, transition to one as tolerated; pushup progression beginning at week 9 (wall pushup → incline → horizontal → decline; once complete, may reintroduce all weight lifting exercises at 50% typical weight and progress as tolerated)

Total Visits: 24 – One to two times per week with daily home stretching; strengthening 3x per week including PT