

Physical Therapy Protocol: Distal Biceps Repair

Phase 1: Weeks 0 through 6 – Pain Control and Motion Recovery

Physician Goals: Decrease pain and inflammation, regain normal range of motion

Exercises: Passive elbow flexion/extension and forearm pronation/supination range of motion with goal of painless normal motion, periscapular stabilizer strengthening immediately, grip strength, wrist flexor/extensor strengthening; no resisted elbow flexion or forearm supination

Comments: Hinged elbow brace worn at all times for first 6 weeks except for hygiene. Lock at 90 for first week, then advance extension 20° per week with goal of full extension by week 6 postop visit. Return to work on a case-by-case basis.

Total Visits: 12 – Once to twice per week with daily home stretching

Phase 2: Weeks 6 through 12 – Functional Strength Recovery

Physician Goals: Gradually increase strength to allow for all activities of daily living

Exercises: Deltoid and rotator cuff isometrics, continue working on grip strength, wrist extension/flexion strength, resisted elbow extension; **beginning week 9** - full active elbow flexion with light weights (start with 1 pound and increase to max of 5 pounds by week 12) once able to perform full active ROM without discomfort

Comments: Discontinue hinged elbow brace once cleared by Dr. Vega's team, full active elbow flexion/extension/pronation/supination, elbow flexion against resistance beginning at week 9

Total Visits: 12 – One to two times per week with daily home exercises; strengthening 3x per week including PT

Phase 3: Weeks 12+ – Strength Recovery

Physician Goals: Gradually increase strength to allow for all activities including weightlifting and recreational sports

Exercises: Continue strengthening scapular stabilizers, progress to elbow resistance work with light hand weights or bands and progress as tolerated, increase weight/resistance when 30 repetitions are easy and painless; two hand plyometrics, transition to one hand as tolerated; unrestricted biceps curls and resisted forearm supination beginning at 12 weeks

Comments: Goal of PT is to regain strength needed to perform all ADLs and recreational activities without pain, transition to HEP when ready; Golfers may begin putting at 6 weeks (once elbow motion is full), chipping at 10 weeks, and progress to full golf swings by 3 months postop; Light tennis/pickleball at 12 weeks; overhead throwers (baseball/football) begin throwing program at 4.5 months; unrestricted weight lifting by 3 months

Total Visits: 12 – One to two times per week with daily home stretching; strengthening 3x per week including PT