Rehabilitation Guidelines for Large/Massive Rotator Cuff Tears Following Surgical Repair

Phase I: 0-6 weeks Post-op:

Goals:
1. Patient education
2. Permit healing
3. Control pain and inflammation
4. Initiate range of motion exercises

Immediate Post-op or Post-op day #1:
1. Patients may be immobilized in sling or abduction brace
2. Pendulums
3. Hand squeezes
4. Elbow AROM

7-10 Days Post-op:
1. Pendulums
2. Supine PROM forward elevation and external rotation above level of brace
3. Heat and ice
4. Active scapular exercises (shoulder shrugs and scapular retraction)

Phase II: 6-12 weeks Post-op:

Goals:
1. Improve to full ROM
2. Improve neuromuscular control and strength

Treatment:
1. Continue all stretches
2. Add Phase II stretches (IR, cross body adduction, and extension)
3. Rotator cuff isometrics (submaximal)
4. Phase I strengthening (ER, IR, extension)
Resisted scapular strengthening (with arms below should height)

**Phase III: 12-16 weeks Post-op:**

**Goals:**

1. Full pain-free ROM
2. Optimize neuromuscular control
3. Improve endurance
4. Initiate return to functional activities

**Treatment:**

1. Continue all stretches and strengthening
2. Progress to Phase II strengthening when at green for all Phase I exercises (abduction, forward elevation, ER @ 45° in POS with arm supported)
3. Manual resistance for rotator cuff and deltoid
4. Bodyblade in non-provocative positions

**Phase IV: 16 weeks – 6 months Post-op:**

**Goals:**

1. Return to work, sport, or desired activities (in appropriate patient)
2. Promote concept of prevention

**Treatment:**

1. Work hardening
2. Gradual return to work or desired activity
3. Progress Bodyblade into elevated positions
4. Work/sport specific exercises