

Distal Biceps Repair Rehabilitation

Phase I: 1-3 weeks

Clinical Goals:

- Elbow ROM from 30° of extension to 120° of flexion.
- Maintain minimal swelling and soft tissue healing
- Achieve full forearm supination/pronation

Testing

- Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM

Exercises

- Six times per day the patient should set his ROM hinged brace at 30° of extension and 120° of flexion and perform active assistive flexion and active extension exercises within the brace. Two sets of 10 are performed.
- The brace is then reset at 90°, the forearm straps are loosened, and the patient performs 2 sets of 10 forearm rotations. The straps should then be secured.
- Ice after exercise, 3-5 times per day
- Sling should be worn only as needed for comfort with patient maintaining full shoulder ROM.

Phase II: 3-6 Weeks

Clinical Goals

- Full elbow and forearm ROM by 6 weeks
- Scar management

Testing

- Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM
- Grip strengthening at 5-6 weeks

Exercises

3 weeks:

- The extension limit in the brace is changed to 20°. Flexion remains at 120°, but patient may remove brace to allow full flexion 2 times per day.
- The brace stays on at all other times except when washing the arm.
- Scar massage 3-4 times per day.

4 weeks:

- Extension limit is changed to 10°.
- Continue the same exercises. Soft sponge ball may be used 3 times per day for 10 minutes to improve grip strength.

5 weeks:

- The extension limit is changed to 0° and exercises are continued in the brace.

6 weeks:

- The brace is discontinued, unless needed for protection.
- Passive elbow extension exercises are initiated if needed.
- Light strengthening exercises are initiated with light tubing or 2-3 pound weights for elbow flexion, extension, forearm rotation and wrist flexion and extension.

Ice is continued after strengthening exercises.

Clinical Follow-up

- The patient usually is seen at 3 weeks and at 5-6 weeks, then only as needed with doctor appointments, until full motion is achieved and to monitor the patient's strengthening program.

Phase III: 6 Weeks to 6 Months

Clinical Goals

- The strengthening program is gradually increased so that the patient is using full weights by 3 months. It may be as long as 6 months before a patient returns to heavy work.

Testing

- Grip strengthening
- Elbow ROM Exercises
- Elbow ROM exercises are performed if ROM is not WNL
- Strengthening exercises to wrist, elbow, forearm, and possibly shoulder depending on sport and/or work requirements

Clinical Follow-up

- The patient is seen at 3 months then 6 months if needed