

Rotator Cuff Repair

Recovery from rotator cuff is a *long* process. The rehabilitation is typically divided into three phases.

1. Immobilization Phase: the shoulder is kept still in order to allow the tendon to heal back to the bone. (lasts +/- 4 weeks)
2. Mobilization Phase: a slow and controlled process of regaining motion in the shoulder. (typically 4 weeks as well)
3. Strengthening Phase: a gradual process of regaining strength in the repaired and weakened shoulder. (often begins around 8 weeks after surgery)

Complete recovery from rotator cuff repair can take as long as 6-12 months. However, you will certainly be functional with activities of daily living much earlier than 6 months. Listed below are some of the more common complications associated with rotator cuff repair:

1. Infection after shoulder arthroscopy is rare but does occur. If it happens, there is often a need for further surgery to eradicate the infection and it can require up to 6 weeks of IV antibiotics.
2. Stiffness can occur after rotator cuff repair and can at times require further surgery in order to regain motion. Rehabilitation is clearly a balance between keeping the shoulder still to protect the repair and getting the shoulder moving to avoid undue stiffness. The size of the tear will often dictate how early you can begin moving the shoulder after surgery.
3. Neurovascular injury can occur during any arthroscopic intervention. It can lead to temporary or permanent numbness and/or weakness in the involved extremity. Fortunately, this is a rare phenomenon after arthroscopy.
4. Not all tears are repairable. In some situations the chronic of the tear and degree of atrophy/retraction make the rotator cuff un-repairable. Often, patients with a incomplete repair will still realize some improvement after surgery. Their pain at rest and at night may diminish, but return of function and strength may not be as complete as they anticipated.
5. Anesthesia risks are always a concern with any surgical intervention. Your risk with anesthesia is closely tied to your overall medical health. The anesthesia staff will give you a better sense of what your anesthetic choices are and the inherent risks of each.

After Surgery:

- You will be more comfortable sleeping upright if possible for the first 3-5 days. Patients will often sleep more comfortably in a recliner the first few nights after surgery.
- It is important that you begin to take the pain medication BEFORE your block wears off.
- You will need to be in the shoulder immobilizer for 3-4 weeks after surgery.
- You will need to do some gentle hand, wrist and neck exercises during the immobilization phase in order to keep the rest of the extremity limber.

Follow-up:

- 7-10 days (sutures out/radiographs)
- Formal therapy begins @ roughly three weeks
- 3-4 weeks
- 8 weeks
- 12 weeks
- 6 months/1 year