

Introduction

The rehabilitation programme will need to be **individualised** for each patient, all exercises should be performed without pain and the details of any restrictions will be in the post-operative instructions. If you have not received these please ring the consultant's secretary.

Emphasise to the patient the importance of allowing soft-tissue healing in the first 4-6 weeks. Alongside this we aim to regain active range of movement (AROM). The milestones may be used to assess whether you feel the patient is making good progress or not.

Phase 1 (1-14 days)

Goals:

- Management of pain and inflammation.
 - Analgesics, NSAID's, ice and elevation with sling.
- Teach full range active elbow and radio-ulnar joint exercises - flexion/extension and supination/pronation.
- Teach gentle, active wrist exercises into full range - flexion/extension within pain free range, should only feel a mild stretch at end of range.
- Prevent muscle atrophy - sub-maximal, pain-free isometrics into flexion/extension with wrist in neutral (<30% maximal voluntary contraction) as tolerated.

Precautions:

- Avoid any heavy loading/lifting.
- Sling usually for 3 days for comfort as required (continue to elevate once out of sling).
- Keep wounds clean and dry.

Milestones:

- Pain, inflammation and muscle inhibition well managed.
- Full active joint range.

Phase 2 (day 15-6+ weeks)

Goals:

- Continue to manage and reduce pain, inflammation and muscle inhibition.
 - As phase 1 plus alternate treatment strategies as appropriate e.g. manual therapy techniques, taping.
- Once stitches have been removed begin scar massage.
- Gradually introduce and progress elbow, wrist and hand strengthening **as tolerated/not into pain**.
 - Progress from sub-maximal isometrics in neutral to isotonic strengthening **as tolerated/not into pain**.
 - Introduce and progress proprioceptive exercises.
- Start to progress heavy loading from week 6 onwards (>2-3kg).

Milestones:

- Minimal pain, inflammation and muscle inhibition.
- Return to driving at 2 weeks.
- Return to light/sedentary work at 2 weeks, 6 weeks for heavy/manual work.
- Return to sporting activities:
 - Swimming from 6 weeks
 - Racquet sports from 12 weeks

CircleBath Specialist Orthopaedic Shoulder and Elbow Team

To contact the Consultants Secretaries, call CircleBath Hospital on 01761422222 or to contact the Physiotherapy team call 01761422388.