

Acromioclavicular (AC) Joint Reconstruction Rehabilitation Protocol

PHASE I – MOTION PHASE (Weeks 0-2)

Goals: Initiate ROM exercises
Retard muscular atrophy
Decrease pain/inflammation

Range of Motion Exercises:

- L-bar AAROM
 - Flexion to tolerance
 - ER/IR (begin at 45 degrees abduction, progress to 90 degrees abduction) motion to tolerance
- Rope and pulley scaption
- Pendulum exercises
- Self-capsular stretches
- No active motion - passive and gentle AAROM only

**Note – Restrict horizontal Abduction/Adduction (often painful)*

Strengthening Exercises:

- Isometrics
 - ER, IR, Abd, Ext, Biceps, Triceps
- Initiate ER/IR with exercise tubing at 0 degrees abduction when pain free (usually week 2)

Decrease Pain/Inflammation:

- Ice, NSAIDS, modalities
- Ice applied directly over AC joint

PHASE II – INTERMEDIATE PHASE (Weeks 3-8)

Goals: Gradually regain full ROM
Regain and improve muscular strength
Normalize arthrokinematics
Improve neuromuscular control of shoulder complex

Criteria to Progress to Phase II:

1. Nearly full ROM
2. Minimal pain and tenderness
3. Stable AC joint on clinical exam
4. Good (4/5) MMT of ER/IR/Abd

Week 3

- Range of motion exercises
 - Continue AAROM with L-bar
 - Shoulder elevation to at least 160 degrees by week 4
 - ER/IR at 90 degrees abduction full ROM
- Strengthening exercises
 - Initiate isotonic strengthening (light resistance)
 - Shoulder abduction

- Shoulder extension
- Shoulder ER/IR tubing
- Sidelying ER
- Biceps/triceps
- Prone horizontal abduction
- Prone rowing
- Prone extension
- **Note – Restricted shoulder flexion prohibited (for 4 weeks)*
- Initiate neuromuscular control exercises (PNF)
- Initiate manual resistance
- Continue use of modalities, ice as needed

Week 6

- Range of motion exercises
 - Continue stretching program
 - Ok for all AROM
- Strengthening exercises
 - Continue all strengthening exercises listed above
 - Initiate light resistance shoulder flexion
 - Initiate upper extremity endurance exercises
 - Initiate light isotonic resistance progression
 - NO shoulder press or bench press or pec deck or pullovers
 - Rhythmic stabilization exercise for shoulder flexion/extension
 - Program all shoulder and scapular strengthening exercises

PHASE III – DYNAMIC STRENGTHENING PHASE (Weeks 8-16)

Goals: Improve strength/power/endurance
Improve neuromuscular control/dynamic stability to the AC joint
Prepare athlete for overhead motion

Criteria to Enter Phase III:

1. Full nonpainful ROM
2. No pain or tenderness
3. Strength 70% of contralateral side

Strengthening Exercises:

- Continue isotonic strengthening exercises
 - Initiate light bench press, shoulder press (progress weight slowly)
 - Continue with resistance exercises for:
 - Shoulder abduction
 - Shoulder ER/IR
 - Shoulder flexion
 - Latissimus dorsi (rowing, pull-downs)
 - Biceps/triceps
 - Initiate tubing PNF patterns
 - Initiate ER/IR at 90 degrees abduction
 - Scapular strengthening (4 directions)
 - Emphasis on scapular retractors, elevators
 - Neuromuscular control exercises for glenohumeral and scapulothoracic joints

- Rhythmic stabilization
 - Shoulder flexion/extension
 - Shoulder ER/IR (90/90)
 - Shoulder abduction/adduction
 - PNF D₂ patterns
 - Scapular retract/protract
 - Scapular elev/depress
- Program to plyometric upper extremity exercises
- Continue stretching to maintain mobility

PHASE IV – RETURN TO ACTIVITY PHASE (Week 14 onward)

Goals: Progressively increase activities to prepare patient/athlete to full functional return

Criteria to Progress to Phase IV:

1. Full nonpainful ROM
 2. No pain or tenderness
 3. Isokinetic test that fulfills criteria (Shoulder F/E, Abd/Add)
 4. Satisfactory clinical exam
- Initiate Interval Sports Program
 - Continue all exercises listed in Phase III
 - Progress resistance exercise levels and stretching