

**Small to Medium Rotator Cuff Tears**  
**POST-OPERATIVE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL**

**Diagnosis:** Rotator cuff tear

**Frequency:** 2-3 visits/week   **Duration:** 4 months

**Weeks 1-4: Rest and Healing**

Sling Immobilizer: At all times except exercises

HEP:   Distal ROM with scapular retraction  
          Manual scapular manipulation with patient lying on non-operative side  
          Supine passive FF in scapular plane to 120 deg  
          Supine passive ER to 30 deg

**Weeks 4-6: Protective/Early Motion Phase**

Sling Immobilizer: At all times except exercises (may d/c after 6 weeks)

PROM:   Forward flexion in scapular plane - No limits  
          External rotation 45 deg  
          Internal rotation 30 deg

Therapeutic exercises: Codmans, wand exercises

Strengthening: RTC isometrics with arm in 0 deg abduction and neutral rotation  
                      Scapular stabilization, no resistance  
                      Abdominal and trunk exercises

**Weeks 7-12: Early Strengthening Phase**

PROM/AAROM: FF/ ER/ IR - Full

Therapeutic exercises: Cont wand exercises for ER/IR/FF  
                                  Flexibility, horizontal adduction (post capsule stretching)

Strengthening: RTC isotonic strengthening exercises  
                      AROM: side-lying ER and supine FF in scapular plane  
                      Progress to standing FF  
                      ER/IR @ modified neutral w/ elastic bands  
                      Progress to rhythmic stabilization exercises  
                      Progress to closed chain exercises

**Weeks 12+: Late Strengthening Phase**

- Progress isotonic strengthening: periscapular and RTC musculature
  - Lat pull downs
  - Row machine
  - Chest press
- Flexibility: side-lying post capsule stretch
- Progress scapular stabilization program
- Initiate isokinetic strengthening (IR/ER) in scapular plane
- Begin light plyometrics at 16-18 weeks
- Individualize program to meet demands of sport specific requirements at 20-24 weeks
- Initiate throwing program for overhead athletes at 20-24 weeks