



Distal Biceps Tendon Repair Rehab Protocol

PHASE I: (Weeks 1-3)

- For the first post op week, the patient is in a posterior splint that is not to be removed. Beyond that point, the patient wears a removable posterior splint or a hinged elbow brace locked at 90 degrees.
- This brace is removed or unlocked for the exercises as described here.

Clinical Goals

- Elbow ROM from 30 degrees of extension to 130 degrees of flexion
- Maintain minimal swelling and soft tissue healing
- Achieve full forearm supination and pronation

Testing

- Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM

Exercises

- Patient should perform passive ROM exercises from 30 degrees of extension to 130 degrees of flexion 5-6 times per day for 25 repetitions.
- Apply ice after exercise sessions.
- A sling or “cuff and collar” may be used for the splint or hinged brace respectively. Shoulder ROM exercises are encouraged.

PHASE II: Weeks (3-6)

Clinical Goals

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

Testing

- Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM
- Grip strengthening at 4-6 weeks



Exercises

Week 3:

- **Active** extension limit changed to 20 degrees. **Passive** flexion may be increases to full flexion as tolerated. Brace is worn at all times except when exercising or bathing.
- Scar massage 3-4 times per day.
- Active wrist flexion / extension.
- Active ROM of hand in neutral position.
- Supination / pronation through pain-free range.

Week 4

- Active extension limit changed to 10 degrees.
- Continue same exercises.
- Putty may be used 3 times per day to improve grip strength.
- Ladder with arm supported by unaffected extremity.
- Gentle pulley while limiting elbow extension to -10 degrees.

Week 5

- Full active extension is permitted.
- Brace is worn for full 6 weeks.
- Supine scapula stabilization with no weight.
- Alphabet door / clockwise / counterclockwise circles with ball.

Week 6

- At the end of 6 weeks, the brace may be discontinued.
- Passive elbow extension exercises may be started if needed.
- Light strengthening exercises are started with light tubing or 1-kg weights for elbow flexion, extension, forearm rotation and wrist flexion and extension.
- Shoulder Theraband strengthening exercises are started.
- Supine scapula stabilization with 1kg weight.
- Ball toss / trampoline chest pass 1kg weight.
- Ice after strengthening exercises.



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 if ROM is limited.
- Strengthening exercises to wrist, forearm, and possibly shoulder, depending on sport and/or work requirements.

Clinical Follow-up

- The patient is seen as needed to monitor the progress with strengthening programs.