

## FAQ - Rotator Cuff Disease / Impingement

### **Q: Will I need to wear a sling for any extended period of time?**

A: You will go home after the surgery wearing a sling and may need to wear it temporarily for comfort. However, generally you are encouraged to wean out the use of the sling as tolerated over the first (2) weeks, with the exception of occasions when out among the public, and then only as a warning to others to avoid contact with the shoulder.

### **Q: Can I begin to raise/lift the arm on my own, and if not, when?**

A: During the first 4-6 weeks, you are not allowed to actively move your shoulder; your physical therapist will instruct you in a series of exercises that will not involve using the muscles that were repaired the day of the surgery. Your formal physical therapy session will begin 1-2 days after the surgery. In addition to specific exercises, other treatments will be performed to help reduce pain, swelling, and stiffening of the shoulder.

### **Q: How often will I be attending physical therapy? For how long?**

A: Three times per week is advocated by your physician due to research which demonstrates the best overall outcome are achieved with this frequency of treatment per week. The length of time in formal therapy is generally for 8-12 weeks from the time of surgery due to the healing time necessary before beginning strengthening/resistive exercises, allowing for progression to a totally independent program once the following criteria is met:

1. 90-100% of Passive mobility is met in all directions as compared to the uninvolved shoulder.
2. 75-90% of Active mobility in all directions.
3. Independent with normal activities

### **Q: How often should I perform the exercises I am initially instructed in immediately after surgery?**

A: The exercises in question are called pendulum or Codman's exercises and should be performed 3 times daily and approximately 10-30 repetitions in each direction. The size of the arc of the swing of these exercises should be as large as tolerated without increasing existing discomfort and may be increased as comfort allows.

### **Q: How often and how long should I use ice packs?**

A: You should utilize ice packs for the first few weeks and beyond whenever there is discomfort to reduce pain and swelling as often as you can and you need to cycle it on and off applying it for 20 minutes at a time. This can be performed as many times each day as allows.

1. Apply ice for 20 minutes, remove for 20-40 minutes.
2. Reapply in the same manner during each wakened hour for each day as needed.

### **Q: When can I begin to drive?**

A: At approximately 2 weeks from time of surgery on the average. The criteria for driving is as follows:

1. Once you are no longer taking heavy/narcotic pain medications during the day.
2. Ability to safely control steering wheel with minimal use of involved shoulder and no discomfort doing so.
3. Automatic transmission only during the first 4-6 weeks.

### **Q: When can I go back to work?**

A: Depending on whether or not light duty/transitional duty is available, you could return as soon as 1-2 weeks; you could return as soon as 1-2 weeks. If your occupation requires raising of arms overhead, reaching and lifting, then as soon as you are able to perform your job specific duties

safely approximately 8-12 weeks.

**Q: When will I be able to return to sports, conditioning and recreation?**

A: Depending on the type of activity, you could return in as little as 2 weeks as long as it does not involve lifting or raising the arm (i.e. Walking program as tolerated without pain). Activities involving lifting the arm will not be able to be performed for at least 12 weeks (i.e. Golfing, Tennis). The criteria to return to activities involving elevating/raising the arm (i.e. Golf, Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, and Bowling) is as followed:

1. Strength 80% of uninjured shoulder. Throwing sports require 90% or greater strength and pain free progression of interval throwing programs.
2. No swelling
3. Full range of motion
4. Passing of functional strength tests