

## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR SURGERY

**You will be sent home with a sling and a bulky dressing. You will also be given a handwritten prescription for pain medications. Take the medication as directed to avoid getting behind the pain curve.**

### **Post Op Day 1-3:**

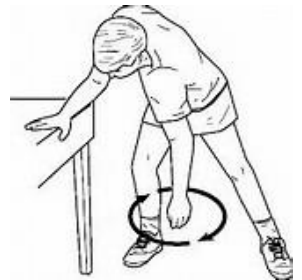
On the third day after surgery you may remove the dressings and shower. You will not remove the Steri-Strips that cover the surgical incisions. You may put Band-Aids over the small wounds if you like, but this is not necessary. To shower, you should remove the sling and leave arm hanging down, and then bend forward to clean under the arm with the opposite hand. If necessary, sutures are removed at the first post-op appointment.

### **Immediate post op arm and sling use:**

**Wear the sling 90% of the day** for the first 6 weeks after surgery to protect the repair, which is critical for proper healing. You should also be sleeping in the sling for the first 6 weeks after surgery. *If you use your shoulder too soon, you can re-tear the repair.*

**You can do Pendulum Exercises to start gentle passive motion for 2-3 minutes, 2-3 times per day.** (see diagram)

### **Pendulum**



During the first 6 weeks, you can come out of the sling to type on the computer, turn the pages of a book, or feed yourself. No active motion of the shoulder, such as reaching outwards or upwards, is allowed. No motion such as that required to wash your hair, do laundry, wash dishes, or clean windows with the arm is allowed in the first 6 weeks. You should not drive a car while wearing the sling.

**Rehabilitation** begins at 4-6 weeks (depending on the severity of the tear):

- Exercises to regain shoulder motion usually begins with a therapist in the 6<sup>th</sup> week after surgery. Therapy is carefully controlled in the first 6-12 weeks while the tendons heal back to the bone.
- The first goal is to regain full motion within 3 months after surgery.
- At **12 weeks**, most patients have regained full motion and will start to work on strength.
- Full recovery time after surgery varies. Most patients have greatly improved at 6 months and are close to normal by 9 months to a year.

### **Expected Recovery Time:**

Time off work is usually between 2 weeks or up to 5 months, depending on the nature of job. No heavy lifting with the arm greater than 15 pounds for the first 5 months is allowed after surgery. Generally, the pain is mostly resolved by 6 months after surgery. Your ability to reach overhead is usually achieved by 6 months after surgery.