



A Medical Corporation

John M. Adams, Jr., M.D. Kevin M. Ehrhart, M.D. Michael B. Gerhardt, M.D. Ronald J. Gowey, M.D. Kenton S. Horacek, M.D.
Thomas P. Knapp, M.D. T. Michael Lain, M.D. Bert R. Mandelbaum, M.D. M. Ramin Modabber, M.D. John R. Sellman, M.D.
Clint Soppe, M.D., Arash Lavian, M.D.

Distal Biceps Tendon Repair – REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Michael B. Gerhardt, M.D.

Phase I: 1-3 weeks

Clinical Goals

- ◆ Elbow ROM from 30° of extension to 120° of flexion (this may vary depending on patient's situation. Dr. Gerhardt will make final determination).
- ◆ Maintain minimal swelling and soft tissue healing
- ◆ Achieve full forearm supination/pronation

Testing

- ◆ Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM

Exercises

- ◆ Six times per day the patient should set his ROM hinged brace at 30° of extension and 120° of flexion and perform active assistive flexion and active extension exercises within the brace. Two sets of 10 are performed.
 - The brace is then reset at 90°, the forearm straps are loosened, and the patient performs 2 sets of 10 forearm rotations. The straps should then be secured.
- ◆ Ice after exercise, 3-5 times per day
- ◆ Sling should be worn only as needed for comfort with patient maintaining full shoulder ROM.

Phase II: 3-6 Weeks

Clinical Goals

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

Testing

- ◆ Bilateral elbow and forearm ROM
- ◆ Grip strengthening at 5-6 weeks

Exercises

- ◆ 3 weeks:
 - The extension limit in the brace is changed to 20°. Flexion remains at 120°, but patient may remove brace to allow full flexion 2 times per day. The brace stays on at all other times except when washing the arm.
 - Scar massage 3-4 times per day.



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◆ 4 weeks:

- Extension limit is changed to 10°.
- Continue the same exercises.
- Soft sponge ball may be used 3 times per day for 10 minutes to improve grip strength.

◆ 5 weeks:

- The extension limit is changed to 0° and exercises are continued in the brace.

◆ 6 weeks:

- The brace is discontinued, unless needed for protection.
- Passive elbow extension exercises are initiated if needed.
- Light strengthening exercises are initiated with light tubing or 2-3 pound weights for elbow flexion, extension, forearm rotation and wrist flexion and extension.
- Ice is continued after strengthening exercises.

Clinical Follow-up

- ◆ The patient usually is seen at 3 weeks and at 5-6 weeks, then only as needed with doctor appointments, until full motion is achieved and to monitor the patient's strengthening program.

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 are performed if ROM is not WNL
- ◆ Strengthening exercises to wrist, elbow, forearm, and possibly shoulder depending on sport and/or work requirements

Clinical Follow-up

- ◆ The patient is seen only as needed, usually with doctor appointments, to monitor progress with strengthening program.