Distal Biceps Tendon Repair – REHABILITATION PROTOCOL
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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.
4 weeks:
- Extension limit is changed to 10º.
- 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 0º 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.