

Rehabilitation Guidelines | Arthroscopic Decompression for Impingement/Bursitis

Your recovery

Rehabilitation after arthroscopic shoulder decompression is a relatively quick process. The procedure aims to relieve pain and improve movement by removing inflammation and reducing pressure within the rotator cuff region of the shoulder.

Unless other repair procedures were needed, the shoulder is structurally sound immediately after the surgery. Your rehabilitation focuses on restoring movement early, followed by gradual strengthening and return to normal activities.

General guidelines

- A sling may be worn for early protection only and is **discontinued within a few days**
- Early movement is encouraged to prevent stiffness
- Rehabilitation progresses quickly compared to other shoulder procedures

Weeks 0-3: Early recovery and movement

During this period focus on:

- Reducing pain and swelling - ice first few days
- Maintaining full mobility of the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand
- Light use of the arm for basic daily activities and work

No sling needed - the shoulder is often more comfortable out of the sling

Driving permitted within a few days

Exercises - demonstrated by the hospital physiotherapist

- Pendulum exercises (small circular movements)
- Assisted range of motion in all key directions
 - No range restriction
 - Include hand behind back as tolerated
- Scapular stabilisation - ensure shoulder posture is maintained

Important:

- Avoid heavy lifting
- Avoid sudden or forceful movements

Weeks 3-6: Restoring full movement and strength

Home based exercises with assistance from a community physiotherapist

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- Isometrics progressing to resistance band exercises as able
 - Continued scapular stabilisation exercises
 - Continue range of motion work in all directions, including hand-behind-back - strive to achieve full range
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6 weeks +: Return to full activity

Rehabilitation progresses to include:

- Ongoing strengthening of the rotator cuff and shoulder blade muscles
- Improved coordination and control
- Introduce gym based exercises including progressive weights training if desired. Pain should guide progression

Activity goals:

- Return to normal daily activities
- Resume work, including physical roles
- Return to sport and higher-level activity

Your rehabilitation journey

Recovery after arthroscopic decompression is typically faster than other shoulder surgeries. Most patients regain full movement and near full function within a few months. Following your physiotherapy program and gradually increasing activity levels is important for best outcome. Don't load the shoulder suddenly in the early phases.

Important note

These guidelines provide a general framework for recovery. Any specific instructions provided by Dr Richard Dallalana or your treating physiotherapist, whether written or verbal, should be followed in preference. Report persistent pain or failure to progress in recovery.