

Rehabilitation Guidelines | SLAP Repair (Superior Labrum Anterior-Posterior)

Your recovery

Rehabilitation after SLAP repair is a **structured and progressive process** designed to initially protect the repaired labrum and biceps attachment then restore movement, strength, and function. Recovery requires a **careful balance between protection and progression**, particularly in the early stages, to allow the labrum to heal securely to the bone.

Rehabilitation should follow these guidelines set out by Dr. Dallalana and coordinated by your physiotherapist

General guidelines

- A sling is worn for **6 weeks**
- Avoid loading the **biceps** in the early stages
- Perform exercise 3x / day
- You may drive from 3 to 4 weeks depending on control of the arm

Weeks 0-6: Protection and early movement

During the first phase, the focus is on managing pain, protecting the repair and early movement
Ice the shoulder for the first week

Sling worn when mobile only, removing it when performing simple tasks in the home or at a desk.

Exercises

- Scapular setting
- Pendular exercises
- Assisted motion within restricted range, usually:
 - Assisted FF to 90
 - ER to 20 degrees
 - IR to the side

Important:

- Light objects only (<1kg), eg laptop, handbag, clothing
- Avoid punching, pulling or supporting body weight through the arm
- Avoid stressing the biceps (no resisted elbow bending)

Weeks 6-12: Restoring movement and early strengthening

Physiotherapist attendance to coordinate the program

Stop the sling

Focus on completion of movement range

Exercises

- Light resistance
 - Isometrics at **8 weeks**
 - Theraband at **10 weeks**
- Gradual introduction of biceps strengthening (later in this phase)
- Functional movement training
- Full active and active-assisted ROM towards full range including hand-behind-back

Important:

- Avoid heavy lifting still (<3 kg)
- Avoid sudden or forceful movements
- Reduce exercise frequency if pain develops

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3-6 months: Advanced strengthening and return to activity

Exercises:

- Progressive strengthening using gym or home-based weights programs as directed
- Proprioception and control (closed-chain exercises; ball on wall)
- Functional exercises tailored to your work or sport
- Continue stretches if movement range has not returned to normal

Guidance for return to activity:

- Return to manual work: approximately **4-6 months**, depending on demands
- Overhead strengthening (e.g. free weights) is delayed until later stages of recovery - **5 to 6 months**
- Return to throwing, racquet or collision sport: typically **6 months +**

Your rehabilitation journey

Recovery after SLAP repair requires patience, as the labrum and biceps attachment need time to heal before the shoulder can be fully loaded.

Care within the first 3 months is critical. Progression through stages is based on adequate comfort with use, movement and strength levels.

Following your rehabilitation program carefully is important to support a stable and successful outcome.

Important note

These guidelines provide a general framework for recovery. Any specific instructions provided by Dr Richard Dallalana, whether written or verbal, should be followed in preference to these guidelines.