

Rehabilitation Guidelines | Elbow Arthroscopy (Keyhole Elbow Surgery)

What to expect during your recovery

Rehabilitation after elbow arthroscopy is a **progressive process** designed to restore movement, reduce pain, and gradually return you to normal function. Recovery is typically **faster than more complex elbow procedures**.

General guidelines

- Early movement is encouraged to **prevent stiffness**
- Swelling and pain should be managed with **regular ice around the elbow**
- **No sling** is required and can be counter-productive to recovery if motion is used
- If tolerated, regular **anti-inflammatory medication** should be taken for 3 weeks to reduce internal swelling and allow quickest recovery of movement
- Avoid heavy lifting or overloading the arm in the early stages

Weeks 0-4: Early recovery and movement

During the first phase, the focus is on reducing swelling and restoring movement.

- Ice elbow for the first week
- Compression bandage (Tubigrip) used for first 3 to 4 weeks
- Normal daily use including driving
 - These are encouraged as part of recovery to assist movement
 - Avoid heavy or highly repetitive activities
- NO SLING to be used

Exercises: (physiotherapist supervised)

- Elbow **extension** (straightening) and **flexion** (bending) to maximal extent tolerated
- **Forearm rotation** (pronation and supination)
- Gentle shoulder stretches in all directions
- Grip strengthening
- Lower body and cardio unrestricted as desired

Important:

- Exercises 3x/day
- Avoid activities that increase pain or swelling
- Wounds and recovery will be reviewed at 2 weeks and dressings removed

Weeks 4-12: Restoring movement and strength

At this time:

- Ensure full restoration of movement, or as close as the individual condition will allow
- Develop strength gradually and return to normal function as comfort and movement allow

Exercises:

- Resistance exercises for biceps, triceps, and forearm rotation
- Shoulder strengthening exercises
- Lower body work if desired

Important:

- Avoid heavy lifting or repetitive strain until comfortable
- Return to work and sport is possible in broad terms as recovery allows.
- Throwing or high intensity sport or gym, or very heavy physical work, should not be undertaken before 4 weeks, even if full movement is attained and the elbow is comfortable, to prevent flare-up of internal swelling setting recovery back.
- Report any block to movement progression or unexpected pain to Dr. Dallalana for investigation

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Important note

These guidelines provide a general framework for recovery. Specific instructions may vary depending on your procedure and individual circumstances. Any instructions provided by Dr Richard Dallalana should be followed in preference to these guidelines.