

Rehabilitation Guidelines | Pectoralis Major Tendon Repair

Recovery Outline

Rehabilitation after pectoralis major tendon repair is designed to allow the tendon to heal securely back to the bone before restoring movement and strength. Recovery requires a **gradual progression**, particularly in the early stages, to avoid placing stress on the repair.

Your rehabilitation will be guided by your physiotherapist based on the framework outlined and tailored to your individual progress.

Full recovery is usually 4 to 5 months

General guidelines

- A sling is worn for **6 weeks**
- Early rehabilitation focuses on **protecting the repair and controlled movement**
- Movements that stretch the chest (particularly extension) are restricted early
- Strengthening is introduced gradually once movement is restored

Weeks 0-2: Protection phase

During the first 2 weeks, the focus is on protecting the repair and allowing early wound healing.

- Sling worn at all times, other than showering, eating, and pendular movement exercise
- Ice the wound area for the first week
- Keep the surgical wound dressing on
 - Showering is permitted with no additional cover (it is waterproof)
 - Allow the arm to hang straight down while bending forward at the waist to wash the armpit
- Normal movement of the elbow, wrist, and hand

Important:

- Small pendular movements only during this phase, 3x / day
- Avoid lifting or using the operated arm with force
- The dressing will be removed at the 2-week follow-up appointment

Weeks 2-6: Early controlled movement

During this stage:

- The sling is continued as above
- **Driving is not permitted until after 6 weeks**
- Shoulder movement begins within safe limits as below

Movement guidelines:

- Forward elevation up to 90 degrees
 - External rotation up to 0 degrees (neutral)
 - Arm kept in front of the body (no reaching behind)
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Weeks 6-12: Restoring full movement

- The sling is discontinued
- Driving permitted
- Active shoulder movement exercises as below
 - Physiotherapy appointments should be commenced to guide the remaining recovery
- Ensure full range of motion is restored now

Exercises

- Full elevation, external rotation and internal rotation
 - May reach behind back, assisted with other hand
- Isometrics into IR for the pec, transitioning into resistance bands from week 7 to 8
- Bands for ER from week 6
- Progress to light weights for both pec and other shoulder muscle groups
- Scaled gym program for formal pec strengthening from 3 months

Reduce load and exercise frequency if pain occurs with exercising. This will not compromise the outcome.

Return to sport and work

Desk based - 6 weeks once out of sling, unless able to be performed with one hand

Light manual 10 weeks

Heavy physical work 3 to 4 months

Throwing, racquet and contact sports from 4 months + once strength restored and clearance from physio

Weeks 12-6 months: Strengthening and return to activity

At this stage:

- Strengthening exercises are progressed
- Functional activities are gradually increased
- Light resistance training may begin

You may begin:

- Light gym-based exercises (as guided)
- Gradual return to strengthening activities

Important:

- Light bench press may be introduced gradually
- Full strengthening activities are typically resumed around **6 months**

Your rehabilitation journey

Recovery after pectoralis major tendon repair requires patience and adherence to your rehabilitation program. Protecting the repair in the early stages and progressing gradually is essential for a 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.