

REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

Your guide to recovery



DR HARRY CONSTANTIN
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WELCOME

Your guide to recovery

following reverse total shoulder replacement

This rehabilitation guide has been carefully developed to support your recovery following surgery and to help you achieve the best possible outcome.

It outlines the recommended rehabilitation pathway, providing guidance for your recovery at home and serving as a resource for you and your physiotherapist throughout the rehabilitation process.

Recovery is a gradual and individual journey. While this protocol provides a structured framework, your rehabilitation may be adjusted according to your specific procedure, progress and goals.

We encourage you to work closely with your physiotherapist and follow the advice provided by Dr Harry Constantin and his team during consultations.

We are committed to supporting you throughout your recovery and helping you return safely and confidently to the activities that matter most to you.



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Your recovery in *four phases*

This protocol is designed to guide you and your physiotherapist through your recovery. Your treatment may be adjusted to meet your individual needs. Never push through sharp pain, and always keep your exercises within the movement limits set for each phase. **Repeat your exercises 3 times a day, 5 days a week.**

1	Protection & Early Motion	WEEKS 0-4
2	Early Strength & Active-Assisted Motion	WEEKS 5-8
3	Strength & Motor Control	WEEKS 9-12
4	Advanced Conditioning	3 MONTHS +

Key principles



Follow the movement limits set by Dr Constantin



Avoid pain and sharp, sudden movements



Focus on control, posture and gradual progression – not speed



Regular physiotherapy reviews keep your recovery safe and steady

Remember

- **Individualised recovery.**
- **Gentle movement** – range of motion should be pain-free and as tolerated; never force end range.
- **Team communication** – ongoing contact between Dr Constantin, your physiotherapist and you keeps progress safe.
- **Healing takes time** – timelines are guides and may need extending.
- **Protect the repair** – avoid jerky, lifting or pulling movements early; respect healing limits.

Protect your new shoulder



Avoid reaching behind your back

No hand behind your back for the first 6 weeks (combined internal rotation, adduction and extension). From week 7, gently – to the sacrum at first.



CRITICAL

Do not push up from a chair for the first 8 weeks

Do not take your weight through your hands to get up from a chair. This is critical to protect your new shoulder.

Things to avoid



Sling full time; no active shoulder movement

Weeks 0–4. Sling at night until week 6



Keep your elbow bent to protect your biceps tenodesis

Weeks 0–6



Elevation below 90°; rotation only to neutral

Weeks 3–4, active-assisted



No weight bearing through the arm

Until week 8



Light weights only (0.5–2 kg); no heavy overhead lifting

Weeks 9–12, and until cleared

Key milestones



WEEKS 5–8

Stop using the sling (night use until week 6). Hydrotherapy.



WEEKS 9–12

Resistance bands and light weights.



12 WEEKS +

Swimming, building up gradually.



4–6 MONTHS

Golf chipping and putting from 4 months. Full swing and full return to sport from 6 months.

Protection & Early Motion

WEEKS 0-4

1

GOALS

Protect the repair and joint replacement. Control pain and swelling. Maintain movement in the nearby joints (shoulder blade, elbow, wrist and hand).

PRECAUTIONS

- ◆ Sling full time. Wear it at night until week 6
- ◆ When out of the sling at home, keep your elbow at your side and use the arm only for the most basic tasks
- ◆ Do not push up from a chair with your arms – critical for the first 8 weeks
- ◆ Keep your elbow bent to protect your biceps tenodesis (performed with your replacement)
- ◆ No active shoulder movement
- ◆ No hand behind your back – avoid combined internal rotation, adduction and extension

PROGRESSION

- **Weeks 0-2:** gentle pendulars and scapula setting from day 1 after surgery, including gentle active elbow and wrist movement.
- **Weeks 3-4:** add active-assisted forward elevation below 90°, and external rotation from the abdomen to neutral.

STRENGTH & CONTROL

Passive range of motion, pendulars, active elbow and wrist movement, scapula setting.

WORK & SPORT

None – walking only.

MAINTENANCE

Daily exercises and ice packs.

Early Strength & Active-Assisted Motion

WEEKS 5-8

GOALS

Stop using the sling. Increase active-assisted and active range of motion. Begin deltoid and scapula control.

PRECAUTIONS

- ◆ Avoid weight bearing through the arm
- ◆ Still no pushing up from a chair with your arms until week 8
- ◆ Wear the sling at night until week 6
- ◆ Keep protecting your biceps tenodesis until week 6
- ◆ No hand behind your back until week 7 – then gently, to the sacrum at first

PROGRESSION

Progress from active-assisted to active range of motion.

STRENGTH & CONTROL

Pulleys, isometrics and scapula retraction.

WORK & SPORT

Light functional movements only. Hydrotherapy.

MAINTENANCE

Continue daily mobility and activation exercises.

Strength & Motor Control

WEEKS 9-12

3

GOALS

Improve strength, endurance and movement quality.

PRECAUTIONS

◆ Avoid sudden or heavy loads

PROGRESSION

Introduce resistance bands and light weights – from the weight of the arm, up to 0.5–2 kg maximum.

STRENGTH & CONTROL

Rows, deltoid raises and rhythmic stabilisation.

WORK & SPORT

Low-impact, non-contact activities only.

MAINTENANCE

Strength program 3–5 times a week.

Advanced Conditioning

3 MONTHS +

4

GOALS

Return to functional activities.

PRECAUTIONS

- ◆ Avoid sudden or heavy loads
- ◆ Avoid heavy overhead lifting unless cleared by Dr Constantin

PROGRESSION

Increase resistance and introduce sport- or function-specific drills.

STRENGTH & CONTROL

Closed-chain work and progressive loading.

WORK & SPORT

Swimming from 12 weeks, building up gradually. Golf: chipping and putting from 4 months, full swing from 6 months. No full return to sport before 6 months.

MAINTENANCE

Long-term shoulder strengthening and control.



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Questions about your recovery?

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