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Elbow Arthroscopy – Cartilage fixation Physical Therapy Protocol

MAXIMUM PROTECTION PHASE (WEEKS 1 to 3)

Goals:

- Initial ROM
- Decrease swelling & pain,
- Promote healing of articular cartilage
- Retardation of muscle atrophy

Post-op 0-2 weeks

- Sling with minimal elbow ROM
- Transition to elbow brace

Post-op Week 2 to 4

- Hinged brace 60-120, gradually increase elbow flexion and extension 10 degrees per week, with full extension at 6 weeks
- Begin ROM with neutral or pronated forearm
- Ok for core strength, scapular strength, shoulder
- Ok for full wrist, hand, finger ROM
- Continue effusion control, joint mobilization

Post-op Weeks 4 to 6

- Continue all exercises above
- Emphasis on restoration of full ROM
- Light resistance exercise for arm (1 lb)
- Wrist curls, extension, continue shoulder strength with light resistance
- Brace to be discontinued after 6 weeks

MODERATE PROTECTION PHASE (WEEKS 6-10)

Goals:

- Protect articular cartilage healing
- Restore/maintain Full ROM
- Shoulder ROM & Strength

Weeks 6 -10

- Continue AAROM & PROM exercises for elbow
- Initiate resistance for biceps & triceps
- Continue Thrower's Ten Program, if indicated
- Stretching & ROM program for shoulder
- Continue ROM exercises for elbow
- Core strengthening program
- Still maintain precautions regarding loading of the elbow

MINIMAL PROTECTION PHASE (WEEKS 10 -16)

Goals:

- Incorporate shoulder endurance program
- Begin throwing program, if indicated
- Improve LE strength/core strengthening in preparation for return to competitive sport, if indicated

Weeks 10 to 16

- Elbow strengthening with gradual resistance
- Gradual loading of the elbow
- Painless ADLs
- Goal is painless activities with strengthening by 3 months
- Progress to full return to sport by 6 months