

## WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR SURGERY

You will be sent home with a shoulder immobilizer and a bulky surgical dressing. You will also be given a prescription for pain medications. Take the medication as directed to avoid getting behind the pain curve.

### Post Op Day 1-7:

You may shower with the surgical dressing in place, just avoid getting it wet. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day after surgery, you may remove the bulky dressing. You should not remove the Steri-Strips that cover the surgical incisions. To shower, you should remove the sling and leave arm hanging down, and then bend forward to clean under the arm with the opposite hand. Do not allow direct spray onto the surgical wounds. Once the dressing is removed, you may gently clean the area with soap and water but no direct shower spray. If necessary, sutures are removed at the first post-op appointment. You are not allowed to towel off or scrub using your surgical arm, it must remain hanging at the side until 'active' motion is permitted by Dr. Costouros or your physical therapist.

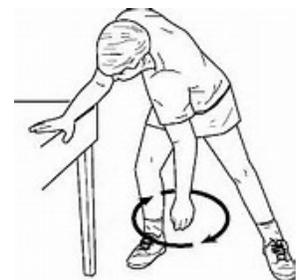
### Immediate post op arm and sling use:

**Wear the sling 90% of the day** for the first 6 weeks after surgery to protect the repair, which is critical for proper healing. You should also be sleeping in the sling for the first 6 weeks after surgery. *If you use your shoulder too soon, you can re-tear the repair.*

**You can do Pendulum Exercises and start gentle passive motion for 2-3 minutes, 2-3 times per day.** (see diagram)

During the first 6 weeks, you can come out of the sling to type on the computer, turn the pages of a book, or feed yourself. No active motion of the shoulder, such as reaching outwards or upwards, is allowed. No active motion of the shoulder is allowed in the first 6 weeks following surgery. You should not wash your hair, do laundry, wash dishes, or clean windows. **You should range the operative elbow, wrist and hand to avoid stiffness beginning the day after surgery and regularly.**

### Pendulum



**Rehabilitation** begins immediately after surgery (unless you are instructed otherwise):

- Therapy is carefully controlled in the first 6-12 weeks while the tendons heal back to the bone.
- At **12 weeks**, most patients have regained full motion and will start to work on strength.
- Full recovery time after surgery varies. Improvement can occur for up to 2 years following surgery.

### **Expected Recovery Time:**

Time off work is usually between 2 weeks or up to 5 months, depending on the nature of your job. No heavy lifting with the arm greater than 5 pounds for the first 4 months is allowed after surgery. Generally, the pain is mostly resolved by 6 months after surgery. Your ability to reach overhead is usually achieved by 6 months after surgery, but may take longer depending on the complexity of the surgery.