

Anterior Cervical Discectomy and Fusion REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Phase I: Protection Phase/Immediate Motion (0 – 6 Weeks post-op)

0-3 Weeks post-op:

- No PT or the first 3 weeks
- Gradual return to ADL's at home
- MD follow up at 3 weeks post op to clear for PT

3-6 Weeks post-op:

- UBE no resistance
- Manage pain and swelling/modalities prn
- Monitor wounds for breakdown or infection
- Light resistance upper extremity exercises: 0-5 lbs.
 - Use massage face cradle for prone exercises to avoid excessive cervical extension
 - Scapulothoracic
 - Posture training
- Home program review/posture education
- Focus on PROM only. No AROM (fusion takes up to 12 weeks to heal in).
- Okay to start PROM, grade I mobs (**No** joint mobilizations within 2 segments adjacent to fusion), and stretching of cervical spine
- Initiate neutral spine core stability training on treatment table: hook lying TA training, diaphragmatic breathing, lumbar multifidi training, etc.
- Soft tissue mobility on thoracic, cervical, upper traps
- Increase activity tolerance

Phase II: Intermediate Phase (6 -12 Weeks post-op)

6-8 Weeks post-op:

- Continue UBE for UE aerobic conditioning
- Manage pain and swelling, modalities prn
- May begin cervical isometrics in neutral
- May begin neural glides/mobilizations. Do not reproduce symptoms
- Progress UE strengthening, scapulothoracic stability, activity tolerance
- Continue neutral spine core stability training on mat. Okay to initiate sitting and standing neutral spine stability training.
- Continue soft tissue mobility
- May begin grade II joint mobilizations on spinal segments. **No** joint mobilizations within 2 segments adjacent to fusion



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8-12 Weeks post-op:

- ❑ Continue UBE, may progress to elliptical, recumbent bike, treadmill walking
- ❑ Progress UE strengthening, scapulothoracic stability, activity tolerance
- ❑ Initiate saggital plane core stability training, continue to avoid extension in cervical spine
- ❑ Continue soft tissue mobility, modalities, as needed
- ❑ Continue joint mobilizations on spinal segments. **No** joint mobilizations within 2 segments adjacent to fusion

Phase III: Advanced Strengthening Phase (12 - 16 Weeks post-op)

12-15 Weeks post-op:

- ❑ Continue cardio equipment as tolerated
- ❑ May begin straight line jogging
- ❑ Introduce core training in transverse and frontal planes progressing to multi planar
- ❑ Un-restricted upper/lower body strengthening.
- ❑ Initiate plyometric program

16 Weeks post-op:

- ❑ Continue with all ROM, flexibility, stretching, strengthening and plyometric exercises
- ❑ Initiate interval sport program if applicable after consultation with physician

Phase IV: Return to Activity Phase (16 – 24 weeks post-op)

- ❑ Continue with established strength and flexibility programs
- ❑ Continue to comply to interval sport program with gradual return to recreation/sport
- ❑ Criteria for return to play:
 - Satisfactory ROM, Strength, and Clinical Exam
 - Satisfactory completion of interval sport program
 - Physician approval



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