



Indiana University Health

IU Health Physicians Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

DISTAL HUMERUS OPEN REDUCTION INTERNAL FIXATION (ORIF)

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL

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Patient Name: _____ **Date of Surgery:** _____

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| <p><u>Procedure:</u> Right / Left Distal Humerus ORIF</p> |
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___ Evaluate and Treat ___ Provide patient with home program

Frequency: _____ x/week x _____ weeks



Phase I (0-6 wks): *NWB and no resisted elbow flexion or forearm supination/pronation. No limits to early ROM which should be advanced as tolerated.*

Weeks 0-1: No formal PT to allow wound healing.

- Post-op posterior elbow splint – if applied - should be worn until first post-op visit at 7-10 days.
- Home exercises only: If no splint is applied, perform gentle passive and AAROM elbow, as tolerated. Shoulder pendulums, finger and wrist ROM.

Weeks 1-6: Begin formal PT (2-3 x/wk).

- Splint/dressing is removed at first post-op visit. Sling should be worn in public and at night, but is not required at other times unless specified. No lifting with operative arm.
- ROM: **Progress PROM → AAROM → AROM elbow and forearm, as tolerated. Home program 3x per day.**
 - Emphasis on achieving elbow flexion/extension.
- Strengthening: Cuff/periscapular/forearm isometrics via wrist flexion/extension; Avoid resisted elbow flexion, forearm rotation.

Phase II (6-12 wks): *Begin aggressive passive ROM and gentle elbow strengthening.*

- Sling is discontinued.
- ROM: Advance aggressive passive stretching at end-ranges, as tolerated. Home program for passive and active ROM. Goal: full, symmetric motion by 3 months. If a static-progressive brace is prescribed, it should be worn at all times except for hygiene or PT.
- Strengthening:
 - Progress cuff/periscapular and forearm isometrics → bands → light weights (1-5lbs) w/8-12 reps x 2-3 sets with elbow in brace. Only do 3x/week.
 - Modalities per PT discretion

Phase III (3-12 months): *Progress to sport/occupation-specific rehab.*

- ROM: Unrestricted active and passive stretching at end ranges as tolerated.
- Strengthening/Activities:
 - Continue bands/light weights as above, 3x/wk.
 - Begin eccentrically resisted motions and closed chain upper extremity/forearm strengthening within pain-free limits.
 - Progress to sport-specific/job-specific exercises at 4 months.
 - Depending on job requirements, may resume lifting once full-strength achieved and healing adequate (usually by 6-9 months).



By signing this referral, I certify that I have examined this patient and physical therapy is medically necessary. This patient ___ would ___ would not benefit from social services.

Date: _____

Bryan M. Saltzman, MD