

Subacromial Impingement, Rotator Cuff Tendinitis, Partial Rotator Cuff Tear Rehabilitation Protocol

The following is a basic framework from which to work during rehabilitation for shoulder subacromial impingement and/or rotator cuff tendinitis, with or without partial tear. Please feel free to communicate with our office with any questions or concerns.

Initial Phase (Pain Management and Reduction of Inflammation)

- Rest: Avoid activities that exacerbate symptoms, especially overhead movements.
- Ice: Apply ice packs to the shoulder for 15-20 minutes several times a day to reduce inflammation and pain.
- Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs): Consider using NSAIDs to help manage pain and inflammation, upon advice from a healthcare provider.
- Gentle Range of Motion (ROM) Exercises: Perform pendulum exercises to maintain shoulder mobility without aggravating the condition.

Intermediate Phase (Restoring Mobility and Beginning Strengthening)

- Stretching Exercises: Focus on gentle stretching to improve flexibility and range of motion. Key stretches include:
 - Cross-body reach
 - Doorway stretch for the pectoral muscles and external rotation
 - Towel stretch for internal rotation
 - Wall climbs or table slides for forward flexion
- Isometric Strengthening Exercises: Begin with isometric exercises to strengthen the rotator cuff muscles without causing excessive movement of the shoulder joint.
- Scapular Stabilization Exercises: Strengthen the muscles around the scapula (shoulder blade) to improve shoulder mechanics, including exercises like scapular retractions and wall slides.

Advanced Phase (Strengthening and Functional Integration)

- Rotator Cuff Strengthening: Incorporate isotonic exercises using resistance bands or light weights, focusing on external and internal rotation, shoulder abduction, and scaption.
- Deltoid and Upper Back Strengthening: Exercises like face pulls, rows, and reverse flys to build strength in supporting muscles.
- Functional Exercises: Gradually introduce activities that mimic daily or sport-specific tasks to restore functional use of the shoulder.



Michael C. Fu, MD, MHS

Sports Medicine & Shoulder Surgery
523 E 72nd St, New York, NY 10021
P: (212) 606-1991 F: (917) 260-4578

Throughout All Phases

- **Manual Therapy:** Techniques such as massage, mobilizations, or other hands-on treatments by a qualified therapist can help improve mobility and reduce pain.
- **Posture Correction:** Emphasize proper posture to reduce strain on the shoulder during daily activities and exercises.
- **Pacing and Gradual Progression:** Monitor symptoms and adjust the intensity of exercises to avoid overloading the healing tissues.
- **Education:** Understanding the condition, proper body mechanics, and how to avoid aggravating activities can prevent future episodes.

Monitoring and Adjustment

- Regularly assess pain, function, and progress throughout the rehabilitation process. Adjust the program as needed based on patient feedback and clinical judgment.