Protocol E1
Physical or Occupational Therapy Protocol for
Elbow Arthroscopic Debridement Procedures
such as
Elbow Arthroscopic Partial or Complete Synovectomy or
Elbow Arthroscopic Loose Body Removal or
Elbow Arthroscopic Capsulotomy or Partial Capsulectomy

Phase I: Motion Phase (weeks 0-4)

GOALS:
• Reduce elbow swelling.
• Prevent upper extremity joint stiffness.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:
• Use pain medication as needed.
• Use ice intermittently as needed for swelling.
• Support elbow in foam arm cradle for first three days postop.
• Neoprene compressive elbow sleeve is applied in the office on third day postop.

EXERCISES:
• **Finger Range of Motion:** Begin active finger flexion and extension in the recovery room. You may use the non-operated hand to help achieve full range of motion of the fingers. Repeat 5-6 times per day.
• **Wrist Range of Motion:** Begin active wrist extension and flexion in the recovery room. Repeat 5-6 times per day.
• **Shoulder Range of Motion:** Begin active shoulder range of motion in all planes on first postop day and continue thereafter. Repeat 5-6 times per day.
• **Elbow Range of Motion:** Begin gentle elbow flexion and extension within the soft elbow dressing on the night of surgery. After compressive elbow sleeve is applied on third day postop, begin progressive active elbow range of motion. Include forearm rotation by rolling palm upward, then downward with elbow flexed at 90 degrees. This will help reduce elbow swelling. Expect full active elbow motion by 2 weeks postop.
• **Gentle Passive Elbow Extension:** If full elbow extension is not achieved by 2 weeks postop, then gentle passive elbow extension may be initiated. Grasp a 1-3 pound dumbbell weight on the operated side. With operated extremity out in front, support the extended elbow with the opposite hand, allowing the weight to pull the elbow into full extension. Hold for 30-60 seconds, repeat 4-6 times per day.
• **Gentle Passive Elbow Flexion:** If full elbow flexion is not achieved by 2 weeks postop, then gentle passive elbow flexion may be initiated. Flex the operated elbow by tightening the biceps. With the opposite hand, gently pull the operated hand toward the operated shoulder. Hold for 30-60 seconds, repeat 4-6 times per day.

PRECAUTIONS:
• Avoid elbow injury.
• Do not lift or push off with the operated extremity.
Protocol E1
Physical or Occupational Therapy Protocol for
Elbow Arthroscopic Debridement Procedures
such as
Elbow Arthroscopic Partial or Complete Synovectomy or
Elbow Arthroscopic Loose Body Removal or
Elbow Arthroscopic Capsulotomy or Partial Capsulectomy

Phase II: Strengthening Phase (weeks 5-12)

GOALS:
• Maintain full elbow ROM.
• Improve upper extremity strength.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:
• Scar massage if needed.
• Limit lifting with operated extremity.
• Discontinue compressive elbow sleeve.

EXERCISES:
• Continue all Phase I and II exercises.
• **Wrist flexion stretch:** Bring operated arm straight out in front with elbow extended, palm downward. With the opposite hand, flex the wrist downward and gently stretch the muscles on the back of the forearm. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-4 times per day.
• **Wrist extension stretch:** Bring operated arm straight out in front with elbow extended, palm downward. With the opposite hand, extend the wrist upward and stretch the muscles on the palm side of the forearm. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3-4 times per day.
• **Wrist flexion curl:** Sit with operated forearm resting on a table, hand extended over the edge of the table. Grasp a one pound dumbbell weight. With palm up, flex your wrist, curling the weight inward. Hold for 5 seconds, 10 repetitions.
• **Wrist extension curl:** Sit with operated forearm resting on a table, hand extended over the edge of the table. Grasp a one pound dumbbell weight. With palm downward, extend your wrist backward. Hold for 5 seconds, 10 repetitions.
• **Biceps curl:** Grasp a 1-3 pound dumbbell weight. With arm held in front of body, elbow supported and palm upward, flex your operated elbow to tighten the biceps muscle. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Complete 10 repetitions.
• **Triceps curl:** Grasp a 1-3 pound dumbbell weight. Raise the operated arm up overhead with the elbow supported by the opposite hand and flexed 90 degrees. Then extend the elbow, raising the weight fully overhead by tightening the triceps. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Complete 10 repetitions.

PRECAUTIONS:
• Avoid elbow injury. Exercises should be pain free.
• Avoid sports activity and heavy lifting until soft tissues are completely healed, elbow pain and swelling have completely resolved, usually 8 weeks postop.