

Protocol W1
Physical or Occupational Therapy Protocol for
Wrist Arthroscopic Debridement Procedures
such as
Wrist Arthroscopic Partial Synovectomy or
Wrist Arthroscopic Triangular Fibrocartilage (TFC) Tear Debridement or
Wrist Arthroscopic Wafer Shortening of the Distal Ulna

Phase I: Protection Phase (weeks 0-2)

GOALS:

- Reduce pain and swelling in the wrist, hand and fingers.
- Prevent stiffness of shoulder, elbow and fingers.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:

- Use pain medication as needed.
- Keep the operated hand elevated in foam arm cradle for first 2-3 days.
- Plaster immobilization in a short arm splint for 1-2 weeks.

EXERCISES:

- **Active and Passive Finger Motion:** Actively bend the fingers into the palm, making a tight fist, then extend the fingers straight. You may use the non-operated hand to aid in full range of motion of the fingers. Repeat 5-6 times a day.
- **Shoulder Range of Motion:** Begin progressive active range of motion in all planes of the shoulder, 10 repetitions, repeat 3 times per day.
- **Elbow Range of Motion:** Begin flexion and extension of the elbow. Rotate forearm by bringing palm upward, then downward.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Keep splint clean and dry. Cover with plastic when showering.
- Do not push off with operated extremity.

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Phase II: Motion Phase (weeks 3-6)

GOALS:

- Restore wrist range of motion (ROM).
- Maintain full ROM of shoulder, elbow, fingers.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:

- Discontinue plaster immobilization at 1-2 weeks postop.
- Use removable short arm splint as needed until 6 weeks postop.

EXERCISES:

- **Continue all Phase I exercises:** Maintain full active shoulder, elbow and wrist range of motion.
- **Wrist Range of Motion:** Begin progressive ROM of the wrist, extending wrist back, then flexing wrist towards palm. Complete 10 repetitions, 5-6 times per day. Goal is to achieve full wrist ROM by end of this phase.
- **Grip Strengthening:** Initiate gentle hand strengthening by squeezing rubber ball, Silly Putty or Nerf ball. May progress to hand exerciser by the end of this phase.
- **Progressive Strengthening:** Wrist curls with 1-3 pound dumbbell weights may be started during the 7th week postop. These formal strengthening exercises are not required in all cases. Grip and forearm strength usually improve over time with activities of daily living.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Avoid pushing off with operated hand.
- Avoid heavy lifting and sports activity.
- Full, unrestricted activity is not permitted until 3 months postop.