

**Protocol S9**  
**Physical Therapy Protocol for**  
**Coracoclavicular Ligament (AC Joint) Reconstruction**

**Phase I: Protection Phase (0-6 weeks)**

**GOALS:**

- Allow time for reconstruction to heal.
- Prevent shoulder stiffness.

**ANCILLARY MEASURES:**

- Use pain medications as needed.
- Shoulder sling and immobilizer should be worn for first 6 weeks.

**EXERCISES:**

- **Elbow/Wrist/Hand ROM:** Active ROM (flexion and extension) of the elbow, wrist and fingers on the operated side is encouraged. Gripping exercises are allowed.
- **Shoulder Range of Motion:** Begin passive range of motion of shoulder, staying below 90 degrees. May progress to active motion, below 90 degrees.

**PRECAUTIONS:**

- Do not use operated arm to push off or lift.
- Do not raise the arm above the level of the shoulder.
- Tabletop activities, such as writing, dining and using the computer are permitted.

**Protocol S9**  
**Physical Therapy Protocol for**  
**Coracoclavicular Ligament (AC Joint) Reconstruction**

**Phase II: Motion Phase (7-12 weeks)**

**GOALS:**

- Begin full active shoulder range of motion.

**ANCILLARY MEASURES:**

- Discontinue use of shoulder immobilizer.
- Use non-narcotic pain medication at night, if required.

**EXERCISES:**

- **Continue all Phase I exercises.**
- **Shoulder Range of Motion:** Begin progressive overhead passive and active range of motion of the shoulder.
- **Shoulder Isometrics:** Shoulder flexion, extension, abduction, external and internal rotation isometrics are encouraged. Shoulder shrug exercise as tolerated. Elbow flexion isometrics may be initiated.
- **Shoulder Isotonic Strengthening with Therabands:** Secure the theraband to a doorknob or hook so that you may stretch the band until you feel resistance. Start using low resistive theraband, 5 repetitions, 3 times per day. Gradually increase repetitions to achieve 20 repetitions per exercise, 3 times per day. Then graduate to more resistive theraband and begin with 5 repetitions and repeat process, gradually increasing repetitions per exercise per day. Strengthening exercises should include shoulder flexion, extension, abduction, external rotation and internal rotation

**PRECAUTIONS:**

- NO sport activities.
- NO heavy lifting.
- Avoid re-injury to the shoulder.

**Protocol S9**  
**Physical Therapy Protocol for**  
**Coracoclavicular Ligament (AC Joint) Reconstruction**

**Phase III: Strengthening Phase (13-18 weeks)**

FOCUS: Shoulder strength

GOALS:

- Maintain full, painless shoulder ROM.
- Strengthen deltoid, rotator cuff and scapular stabilizers.
- Return to functional activities.

ANCILLARY MEASURES:

- Use non-narcotic pain medications at night if required.

EXERCISES:

- **Continue all Phase I and II exercises** described above. Add the following exercises under the direction of a physical therapist.
- **Isotonic Strengthening w/Free Weights:** Progress to light free weights (not more than three pounds) after therabands have been used.
- **Aggressive Stretching:** Self stretching may be helpful prior to strengthening exercises. Stretch in adduction (posterior capsule), external rotation and internal rotation (using towel or belt behind back) to maximize range of motion.

PRECAUTIONS:

- NO heavy lifting.
- NO sports activity.
- Avoid re-injury to the shoulder.

**Protocol S9**  
**Physical Therapy Protocol for**  
**Coracoclavicular Ligament (AC Joint) Reconstruction**

**Phase IV: Advanced Strengthening Phase (19-26 weeks)**

FOCUS: Functional Improvement (if needed)

GOALS:

- Prepare for strenuous work activity
- Prepare for sports activity

EXERCISES:

- **Continue Phase III strengthening** program outlined above on a daily basis. This may be done with or without the supervision of physical therapist.
- **Work Hardening** program is added if required to prepare patient for return to strenuous work.
- **Sports specific exercises** are added if appropriate.

PRECAUTIONS:

- **NO** heavy overhead lifting or work.
- **NO** contact or strenuous sports.

**Protocol S9**  
**Physical Therapy Protocol for**  
**Coracoclavicular Ligament (AC Joint) Reconstruction**

**Phase V: Maintenance Phase (27+ weeks)**

FOCUS: Maintain optimal function

GOALS:

- Return to strenuous work activity without restrictions
- Return to sports activity without restrictions

EXERCISES:

- Continue maintenance exercise program of isotonic strengthening 3 times per week. This is done without the assistance of a physical therapist.
- Continue sports specific exercise program as needed.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Avoid shoulder re-injury by common mechanisms such as overhead work and weight lifting.
- Consider permanent work restrictions or job change.
- Use common sense and avoid painful activities or exercises.