Muscles of the Rotator Cuff

Front View

Subscapularis

Back View

Supraspinatus

Infraspinatus

Supraspinatus

Teres Minor

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Website: www.suncoastshoulder-elbow.com

Guide To Your Rotator Cuff Surgery

Day of the surgery

- The surgery will be an outpatient procedure allowing you to go home the day of the surgery if you prefer
- A light general anesthetic is used for the procedure and you will be asleep for the duration of the surgery
- The day of surgery the anesthesiologist will administer a nerve block that makes the operative arm numb and pain free in the hours following the surgery and typically lasts into the early evening
- The arm will be in a shoulder immobilizer (a type of sling) to protect the arm after surgery
- You will begin taking prescription pain pills the night of the surgery to decrease the pain once the nerve block has worn off. Typically, this requires taking 1-2 pills every 4 hours
- These pills are commonly taken for several days after surgery
- You will also be given prescriptions for a nausea medicine and for constipation as these are two common side effects from the pain pills

- Dr. Cuff will attempt to call you that night after surgery to check on you and see how you are doing

Rehab following surgery

Weeks 0-6

- The day after surgery a home health nurse and therapist will come to the house to inspect the arm. They will teach you and observe you doing the basic light exercises Dr. Cuff wants you to start doing
- The shoulder immobilizer is to be removed to do these exercises 3 times a day but should be worn at night and any time you are up and around the house or out in public
- For the first **6 weeks** the arm will be protected in the immobilizer and you will do these light exercises daily on your own and do not need to go to formal outpatient physical therapy
- The key is to keep the arm by the side during these six weeks and you should not do any outstretched reaching or overhead motion with the arm at this point
- You can begin showering the second day after surgery and get the shoulder wet
- It is okay to drive if you are not taking pain pills and the arm is maintained on the 6 o'clock position on the steering wheel with the operative arm
- Dr. Cuff will see you 1 week after surgery to show you the pictures from your procedure and discuss any issues with you

Weeks 6-12

- Dr. Cuff or his physician assistant will see you again at week 6 after surgery
- The shoulder immobilizer is discontinued at this point
- You will now be able to begin using the arm for light activity and movement but no lifting greater than 5 pounds

- Formal outpatient physical therapy will now begin and you will go 3 times a week to start working on regaining your range of motion
- Following instructions and doing the therapy is an important part of improving the arm after surgery
- No strengthening exercises are to start at this point

Weeks 12 and beyond
- Dr. Cuff sees you again at the 12 week point
- At this point the rotator cuff should be healed enough to progress to strengthening the shoulder
- The therapist will teach you strengthening exercises for 1-2 weeks and then discharge you with a home strengthening program that you should continue to do for another 8-12 weeks at home on your own
- At the 12 week point you are clear to return to most of your recreational activities but should avoid heavy overhead lifting until 6 months from surgery

Important Points:
- Even though you are cleared to return to most activity by week 12 it will take several more months to build up the strength in the shoulder
- It is not uncommon to have continued soreness while doing activity for many months after the procedure
- In most studies is has been shown that it can take **1 full year** to make a complete recovery after rotator cuff surgery
- Every surgery has some risk (infection, blood vessel or nerve injury, complications related to implants, recurrent rotator cuff tears, post op stiffness and pain, biceps cramping and prominence, the risks of anesthesia) but rotator cuff surgery is a relatively low risk procedure with a low complication rate.
- Dr. Cuff follows you during that first year with visits at 6 months and 1 year post op to chart your progress