

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL

Acromioclavicular (AC) Joint Reconstruction

Coracoclavicular ligament reconstruction / stabilization

The coracoclavicular ligaments have been reconstructed to restore the position of the clavicle. The graft/fixation must be protected from the downward pull of the arm; the sling is used longer than for most shoulder procedures and overhead/loaded activity is delayed.

General Precautions

- Sling for 6 weeks — supports the weight of the arm to protect the reconstruction.
- No active abduction or forward flexion above 90° for 6 weeks.
- No lifting, carrying, pushing, or bearing weight through the arm for 6-8 weeks.
- Avoid cross-body adduction and shrugging early.

Phase I — Maximum Protection Weeks 0-6

Goals

- Protect the reconstruction
- Control pain
- Maintain elbow/hand motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- Sling at all times; support the arm when upright
- Passive flexion/abduction limited to 90°
- No active elevation, no loading through the arm

Exercises & Interventions

- Passive/pendulum motion within limits
- Passive ER/IR in the scapular plane
- Elbow, wrist, hand active motion
- Gentle scapular isometrics
- Cryotherapy

Criteria to Advance

- Six weeks of protected healing
- Comfortable within allowed range

Phase II — Motion Weeks 6-12

Goals

- Wean the sling
- Restore full active motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- Progress overhead motion gradually
- No heavy lifting yet

Exercises & Interventions

- Discontinue sling by ~6 weeks

- Active-assisted → active range of motion to full
- Begin scapular and cuff strengthening (light)

Criteria to Advance

- Full active motion
- Normal scapular mechanics

Phase III — Strengthening Weeks 12-16

Goals

- Restore strength

Exercises & Interventions

- Progressive resistive cuff, deltoid, and periscapular strengthening
- Begin overhead and pressing loads after 12 weeks
- Endurance work

Criteria to Advance

- Strength $\geq 80\%$ opposite side
- Full painless motion

Phase IV — Return to Activity Months 4-6

Goals

- Return to full activity, including contact sport

Exercises & Interventions

- Advanced strengthening and plyometrics
- Sport-/job-specific progression

Criteria to Advance

- Symmetric strength
- Return to contact/collision sport typically ~5-6 months

This protocol is a general guideline. Progression is criteria-based and may be advanced or slowed by Dr. O'Donnell based on intraoperative findings, tissue quality, fixation, and individual healing. Time frames are approximate. Direct questions to the office at (305) 393-8810.