

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL

Lateral Epicondylitis — Postoperative Management

After debridement / release of the common extensor origin (ECRB)

Following surgical debridement and repair of the extensor origin, early care protects the repair and controls pain, followed by progressive restoration of motion and strength. Resisted wrist extension is avoided until the repair has healed.

General Precautions

- Splint or soft dressing for ~1-2 weeks.
- No resisted wrist extension or forceful gripping for 6 weeks.
- Protect the incision; manage swelling.

Phase I — Protection Weeks 0-2

Goals

- Protect the repair
- Control pain and swelling
- Maintain adjacent motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- No resisted wrist/forearm activity
- Keep incision clean and dry

Exercises & Interventions

- Gentle active wrist and finger range of motion
- Elbow AROM as permitted
- Edema control / elevation
- Cryotherapy

Criteria to Advance

- Wound healing
- Pain controlled

Phase II — Motion Weeks 2-6

Goals

- Restore full elbow, wrist, and forearm motion
- Begin scar management

Precautions / Restrictions

- No resisted wrist extension yet

Exercises & Interventions

- Full active range of motion elbow/wrist/forearm
- Gentle stretching of wrist extensors/flexors
- Scar mobilization and desensitization

Criteria to Advance

- Full pain-free motion

- Well-healed, mobile scar

Phase III — Strengthening Weeks 6-12

Goals

- Restore strength and load tolerance

Exercises & Interventions

- Progressive isometric → eccentric → concentric wrist extensor strengthening
- Grip strengthening
- Forearm and shoulder-girdle conditioning

Criteria to Advance

- Grip strength improving toward symmetric

Phase IV — Return to Activity Months 3-6

Goals

- Return to full work and sport

Exercises & Interventions

- Sport-/job-specific progression
- Maintenance program

Criteria to Advance

- Full painless function
- Symmetric strength

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.