

PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL

Distal Biceps Tendon Repair

Repair of the distal biceps tendon to the radial tuberosity

The distal biceps has been reattached to the radius. Early care protects the repair by limiting terminal elbow extension and avoiding resisted elbow flexion and forearm supination. A hinged brace is commonly used to advance extension gradually.

General Precautions

- Hinged elbow brace; terminal extension protected and advanced gradually (~10°/week per surgeon).
- No resisted elbow flexion or forearm supination for 6–8 weeks.
- No lifting with the operative arm for ~3 months.
- No sudden or forceful elbow extension.

Phase I — Protection Weeks 0–2

Goals

- Protect the repair
- Control pain and swelling
- Begin protected motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- Brace with limited extension
- No active/resisted flexion or supination
- No weight bearing through arm

Exercises & Interventions

- Active-assisted elbow flexion within brace limits
- Forearm rotation within comfort (unresisted)
- Shoulder/wrist/hand motion
- Edema control / elevation
- Cryotherapy

Criteria to Advance

- Wound healing
- Comfortable within allowed range

Phase II — Progressive Motion Weeks 2–6

Goals

- Gradually restore full extension
- Restore active motion

Precautions / Restrictions

- Advance extension per brace schedule
- No resisted flexion/supination

Exercises & Interventions

- Progress passive/active extension to full by ~6 weeks
- Active elbow and forearm motion (unresisted)
- Scar management

Criteria to Advance

- Approaching full extension
- Full active flexion

Phase III — Strengthening Weeks 6-12

Goals

- Restore full motion
- Begin strengthening

Precautions / Restrictions

- Begin light resisted flexion/supination ~6-8 weeks, progress gradually

Exercises & Interventions

- Progressive elbow flexion and supination strengthening
- Grip and forearm strengthening
- Endurance work

Criteria to Advance

- Full motion
- Strength improving

Phase IV — Return to Activity Months 3-5

Goals

- Return to full activity and sport

Exercises & Interventions

- Advanced strengthening
- Sport-/job-specific progression

Criteria to Advance

- Symmetric strength
- Return to heavy lifting/sport typically ~4-5 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.