



## Rotator Cuff Repair Surgery Information

Below is some information regarding your operation, which is intended as a guide. Please read this. For any further clarification, or if you have any queries or issues, please contact my rooms as soon as possible on 9389 3855 or email: [spenceradmin@hogwa.com.au](mailto:spenceradmin@hogwa.com.au)

With kind regards,

Mr Jonathan Spencer

### Soft Tissue Shoulder Surgery: Risks and Benefits

#### Aim of Surgery

- Reduce shoulder pain
- Improve shoulder function
- Improve overall quality of life and mobility

Overall success rate: 95%

#### What to Expect

- 1-2 days in hospital
- 2 weeks of swelling and discomfort requiring significant pain killers
- 4-6 weeks in a sling
- 6 -12 weeks for reasonable recovery
- 6-12 months for a good to full recovery

#### Risks

- 5% chance of minor complication
- 0.5-1% chance of serious complication
- Risk of dissatisfaction with the outcome of surgery

## **Possible Complications of Surgery**

- Wound infection
- Deep joint infection
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- Fracture
- Nerve injury
- Revision surgery
- Heart attack
- Chest infection
- Pulmonary embolism

## **Post Operation Wound Care**

- Keep wool and crepe bandages on for 24 hours after the operation.
- Keep wounds clean, dry and covered for 2 weeks or until the wound is completely healed. If the dressings get soaked through, they will need to be changed.
- Do not soak the incision (ie. bath or pool) until the wound is completely healed.
- Mr Spencer mainly uses dissolvable stitches.
- If you have any concerns about your wound please contact Mr Spencer's rooms.

## **After your Rotator Cuff Repair: A Rehabilitation Guide**

**All exercises** performed should be **within pain and comfort**. Every shoulder repair progresses differently. Listen to your shoulder and discuss any concerns with Mr Spencer or your Physiotherapist.

*Notes in italics below are guidelines intended for your Physiotherapist.*

### **Weeks 0-4**

- **Do not use your muscles in your arm to lift** your arm or anything else. *Shoulder exercises must be passive (i.e. the operated arm muscles stay relaxed).*
- Ensure you **take adequate pain relief medication**.
- **Wear a sling** (day and night) for at least the first 4 weeks. Only take the sling off for exercises and a shower. Ensure the sling is comfortable and the arm relaxed.
- **Do exercises** 3-4 times/day (a good time is straight after a shower and/or half an hour after taking your pain medication). *Exercises include: pendular circles, elbow bending/straightening (ensure elbow straightening maintained whilst in sling), hand open/close, wrist supination/pronation, gently squeeze shoulder blades back together.*
- You can **use ice** 15-20 minutes, 3-4 times/day for pain relief (including after set exercises). The pendular exercise can also reduce aching.
- **Sleeping:** keep your sling on and try using pillows in different positions to support your arm so that you are comfortable and relaxed. You may find sitting semi-reclined more comfortable initially when sleeping.

- You may be able to return to **work** (in a non-physical role) from approximately 2 weeks. If you have a manual labour job it will be at least 3 months. Discuss this further with Mr Spencer.

## **Weeks 4-6**

Aim: Regaining Movement

- Slowly **wean off sling** from 4 weeks.
- **Physiotherapy** treatment from 4 weeks onwards.
- Continue **passive range of movement exercises** for your shoulder within pain and comfort.
- **Driving** when you feel safe and competent to do so (not before 4 weeks and you must be out of the sling). Before returning to driving, you should contact your insurance company to ensure you are covered to drive.

## **Weeks 6-12**

Aim: Continue to regain shoulder movement and a gradual return to using muscles

- Continue to **aim towards achieving a full range of movement** with your shoulder.
- You can start using your arm for activities of daily living, initially with your elbow at your side. Be careful not to strain your arm i.e. pushing yourself up out of a chair or the bath.
- **6 weeks:** Active-assisted range of movement exercises.
- **8 weeks:** Start Isometric strengthening exercises.
- **10 weeks:** Slowly progress strength exercises to active exercises through painfree range as able.
- **10 weeks: Swimming** – you can attempt a gentle modified breaststroke, it should be pain free and comfortable.

## **Weeks 12+**

Aim: Continue to regain movement and start to increase strength

- Able to try swimming overarm stroke
- Return to sport as advised by your surgeon
- *Specific sport/work/leisure activity rehabilitation as able, including scapular control*
- *Progressive strengthening exercises as tolerated*

## **6-9 Months**

- Able to return to non-contact sport (6 months) and contact (9 months).
- Able to return to gardening, digging, manual work (discuss with Mr Spencer).
- Discuss these further with Mr Spencer.