



Rehabilitation Protocol

Proximal Humerus Fractures: Nonoperative Treatment

Outpatient Physiotherapy Phase 1: (Weeks 2-4)

- Cervical, elbow and wrist ROM
- Pendulum exercises as tolerated
- Instruct in home program. Encourage pain control.
- Note: Patient should EXPECT bruising in the anterior arm, chest wall, or forearm. This is due to subcutaneous bleeding after the fracture and is monitored clinically.

Strengthening

- No cuff strengthening
- Begin and instruct in program of postural correction
- May begin scapular retraction and depression
- Grip strengthening

Sling

- Arm in sling at all times except for exercises and bathing; Includes sling at night (sleeping in recliner chair optimal); Discontinue sling between 2-4 weeks

Outpatient Physiotherapy Phase 2: (Weeks 5-8)

- Begin self-assisted forward elevation to 90° and progress in 20° increments per week
 - May use pulleys
- Begin self-assisted ER with progressive return to full in 20° increments per week
- IR in scapular plane as tolerated (No IR behind back)
- No cross body adduction



- Grade I-II scapulothoracic and glenohumeral mobilizations
- **Strength**
 - No cuff strengthening
 - Continue scapular retraction and depression
 - Lower extremity aerobic conditioning
- Modalities to decrease pain and inflammation
- Cryotherapy as necessary

Outpatient Physiotherapy Phase 3: (Weeks 9-12)

- Progressive return to full forward elevation and external rotation
- May begin posterior capsular stretching program
- May begin IR behind back
- Grade III-IV glenohumeral and scapulothoracic mobilizations
- Begin anterior chest wall stretches (pectoralis minor)

Strength

- Instruct in home program and begin submaximal isometrics in flexion, abduction, IR, ER and extension
- Add progressive isotonic with low resistance, high repetitions as tolerated
- Emphasize anterior deltoid strength and scapular stabilization



- Emphasize upper trapezius, serratus anterior force couple rehabilitation to create stable scapular base
- Assess for and correct compensatory movement patterns
- UBE with low resistance
- Continue aerobic conditioning

Outpatient Physiotherapy Phase 4: (> Week 12)

- Progressive return to full motion in all planes
- Emphasize posterior capsule stretching
- Maintenance home flexibility program

Strength

- Continue rotator cuff and scapular strengthening program
 - Progressive increase in resistance as strength improves
- Continue UBE with progressive resistance as tolerated
- Recreation/vocation specific rehabilitation
- Maintenance of aerobic conditioning home program