

Olecranon ORIF PT Protocol

PHASE I (0-6 WKS)

Period of protection: splint/brace should be worn at all times during this phase (except for hygiene and PT). No active elbow extension. Therapists may slowly advance elbow flexion (and corresponding brace setting) within a tension-free zone. D/C brace after 6 weeks.

Weeks 0-1: No formal PT. Splint without motion.

- Splint/brace used to immobilize elbow at roughly 45 degrees.
- Home exercises only (gentle wrist and shoulder ROM).

Weeks 1-6: Begin formal PT. Brace with careful progressive motion.

- Brace unlocked to allow ROM from full extension to 30 degrees of flexion. Flexion setting may be increased slowly (ie. roughly 10 degrees per week) to match whatever passive, tension-free extension is achieved during therapy sessions (see below). Brace should be worn at all times (except for hygiene or PT).
- ROM: Flexion: active and gentle passive elbow flexion to 30 degrees, advancing as tolerated to a ***tension-free endpoint***. Therapists may slowly increase the flexion block setting on the brace to match the tension-free flexion achieved during therapy sessions (ie. if elbow can be passively flexed to 70 degrees without tension, brace may be reset to 70 degree flexion block after that therapy session). Extension: ***passive-only*** extension to tolerance (**NO active extension**). Passive forearm supination/pronation. Continue shoulder/wrist ROM.
 - Goal: full elbow extension, tension-free flexion to 120 degrees, and full forearm supination/pronation by 6 weeks.
- Strengthening: Cuff/periscapular/forearm isometrics in brace, within above motion limits.

PHASE II (6-12 WKS)

Motion is more aggressively advanced. Still no resisted elbow extension or lifting with the operative arm.

- Discontinue brace.
- ROM: Advance active and passive elbow flexion to full (if not already achieved). Gentle passive stretching at end-ranges as tolerated. Begin gentle active elbow extension (gravity only). Continue forearm supination/pronation, shoulder and wrist ROM. Goal: full, tension-free elbow and forearm motion by 9 weeks.

- Strengthening:
 - ***Avoid resisted elbow extension until 3 months post-op.***
 - Progress cuff/periscapular and forearm isometrics → bands. Only do 3x/week to avoid cuff tendonitis.
 - Modalities as per PT discretion

PHASE III (3-6 MONTHS)

Begin resisted elbow extension and progress to sport/occupation-specific rehab.

- ROM: Unrestricted active and passive stretching at end ranges as tolerated.
- Strengthening/Activities:
 - Continue bands, progressing to light weights (1-5 lbs), 3x/week.
 - Begin gentle resisted elbow extension and transition to closed chain upper extremity/forearm strengthening within pain-free limits.
 - Progress to sport-specific/job-specific exercises at 4.5 months.
 - Depending on job requirements, may resume lifting once full-strength achieved and healing adequate (usually by 6 months).