POST-OPERATIVE PROTOCOL

Arthroscopic Posterior Labral Repair

Keyhole repair of a torn labrum at the back of the shoulder socket

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This sheet takes you through your recovery, phase by phase, after a keyhole operation to repair the labrum at the back of your shoulder socket. The early weeks are about protecting the repair, moving the shoulder only with help and within limits; the movement and then the strength are built up gradually after that.

SLING	EXERCISES	PUSH-UPS AND BENCH PRESS	SPORT
4 weeks	3 times a day	Not before about 3 months	Usually from 6 months

Your operation

Your shoulder is a ball and socket joint with a shallow socket, which lets the arm move freely. A rim of gristle around the socket, the labrum, deepens it and helps to hold the ball in place. When the ball slips backwards in the socket, the labrum at the back can tear, and the shoulder can keep slipping, ache, or feel weak, especially when you push with the arm in front of you.

In an arthroscopic posterior labral repair, through a few small openings (keyhole surgery), the surgeon stitches the torn labrum, and the lining of the joint attached to it, back onto the back of the socket.

The repair needs about 8 weeks to heal firmly. Until then it must be protected: turning the arm inwards, reaching across your body, and pushing with the arm in front of you would all stretch it.

Your sling

- Wear the sling for 4 weeks, day and night, including in bed.
- Your sling has a firm cushion (an abduction brace) that sits at your side and holds the arm a little away from your body, with the forearm pointing forwards rather than resting across your stomach. This stops the arm turning inwards, which would stretch the repair.
- Take it off only to wash, and to do your exercises. To wash under your arm, lean forwards a little and let the arm hang down gently.
- While the arm is in the sling, use your hand for light tasks, such as writing and eating.

While the repair heals, avoid

- Turning the arm inwards past straight ahead, until 6 weeks: with your elbow at your side, keep your forearm pointing forwards, not across your stomach.
- Reaching across your body, for example to the other shoulder or across a table, or putting your hand behind your back, until 8 weeks.

- Raising the arm above shoulder height, or lifting it with its own muscles, until 6 weeks.
- Pushing yourself up from a chair or bed with the operated arm, until 6 weeks.
- Push-ups, planks and bench press, and pushing heavy doors or loads, usually not before about 3 months, and only when your physiotherapist adds them.
- Lifting or carrying anything heavier than a cup, until 8 weeks.
- Forcing any stretch, especially turning the arm inwards or reaching across your body, at any stage.

Easing pain and swelling

- Take your painkillers regularly, as prescribed, rather than waiting for the pain to build up. The exercises are much easier when the pain is under control.
- Once the numbness has worn off, an ice pack wrapped in a thin towel, for up to 20 minutes at a time, several times a day, eases pain and swelling. Keep the dressings dry.
- Many people sleep better propped up on pillows, with a pillow supporting the operated arm.

Getting back to everyday life

- Driving: ask your doctor before you drive again. When you can depends on your progress, and on feeling confident that you can control the car safely.
- Keeping fit: from about 4 weeks, brisk walking or an exercise bike, as comfort allows.
- Swimming: from about 4 months, as your physiotherapist advises.
- Heavy lifting: your return to heavy lifting is built up gradually, and planned separately for each person, depending on your work and what it demands of your shoulder.
- Sport: usually from 6 months. Your return is built up gradually, and planned separately for each person, depending on the sport and how much contact it involves.

CONTACT THE CLINIC URGENTLY IF

- You have a fever, or feel unwell.
- The wound becomes red, hot or more swollen, or starts to leak.
- The pain suddenly gets much worse, or your painkillers are not controlling it.
- Your hand goes numb, or your fingers turn cold, pale or blue.
- You have pain or swelling in your calf.
- You have a fall, or the shoulder slips out of place or suddenly feels different.

Clinic: +91 99197 03477. If you are short of breath or have chest pain, go to the nearest emergency department straight away.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Start Phase 1 on the day after your operation, unless you are told otherwise.
- Until 6 weeks, move the shoulder only with help, from your other arm or a table; keep the arm below shoulder height, and do not turn it inwards past straight ahead. Until 8 weeks, do not reach across your body or behind your back.
- Move slowly and smoothly. Some discomfort is normal, but stop if a movement causes sharp pain, or makes the shoulder feel as if it might slip out, and never force it. Check in a mirror that your shoulder does not hitch up towards your ear.
- The timings are a guide. Follow these exercises as they are written unless Dr Malik tells you otherwise.
- This sheet does not replace individual advice. If it differs from what you were told in clinic, follow the advice you were given there.

WEEKS 0–6

Phase 1: Protecting the repair

The repair is at its most fragile. Wear the sling for the first 4 weeks, taking it off only to wash and to do these exercises, and keep to the limits above.

01 Neck, elbow, wrist and hand

Keeping the joints around the shoulder moving while the arm is in the sling.

1. Neck: sitting up tall, turn your head slowly to look over each shoulder in turn, then tilt each ear towards its shoulder.
2. Elbow: with the sling off and your upper arm resting at your side, bend and straighten the elbow as far as it goes.
3. Wrist and hand: circle your wrist both ways, then make a fist and spread your fingers wide.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10 of each	3 times a day

02 Shoulder blade exercises

Keeping the shoulder blade moving freely, and helping your posture.

1. Sit or stand up tall, with the operated arm resting in the sling or on a pillow.
2. Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears, then let them drop and relax.
3. Draw your shoulders gently forwards, then squeeze your shoulder blades back and down. Hold for 5 seconds, and relax.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10 of each	3 times a day

03 Table slides

Moving the shoulder, with the table taking the weight of the arm.

1. Sit at a table with your operated arm resting on it, the hand on a small towel.
2. Lean your body forwards so that your hand slides forwards along the table. The arm moves because you lean, not because you lift it.
3. Slide forwards, and a little out to the side, only as far as is comfortable. Do not slide the hand across in front of your body.
4. Sit back to slide the hand back.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10	3 times a day

04 Turning the arm outwards, with help

Gently keeping the outward turn of the arm, with your other arm doing the work.

1. Lie on your back with your operated elbow bent to a right angle and tucked into your side. A folded towel under the elbow helps.
2. Hold a stick, such as a rolled umbrella, in both hands.
3. Use your other arm to push the operated hand slowly outwards, keeping the elbow tucked in, as far as is comfortable. Never force it.
4. Bring it back only until your forearm points straight up at the ceiling: until 6 weeks, do not let it fall inwards across your stomach.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN
10	3 times a day

05 Muscle tightening in each direction

From 4 weeks: waking up the muscles that steady the shoulder, without moving the joint.

1. Stand side-on to a wall, the operated arm nearest to it, with the elbow bent to a right angle and tucked into your side. The arm does not move in this exercise.
2. Outwards: press the back of your wrist gently against the wall.
3. Sideways: press the outside of your elbow gently against the wall.
4. Inwards: in a doorway, press the palm side of your wrist gently against the door frame.
5. Use only about a third of your full strength. It should not hurt.

HOLD	REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
5 seconds	10 each way	3 times a day	From 4 weeks

> **MOVING ON** Leave off the sling at about 4 weeks. Move on at about 6 weeks, once these feel easy.

WEEKS 6–12

Phase 2: Regaining movement

Carry on with Phase 1, and add these. Turning the arm inwards comes back gradually from 6 weeks, and reaching across your body from about 8 weeks; never force them. From about 8 weeks, your physiotherapist may also add light work with an exercise band.

06 Lying arm raises, with help

From 6 weeks: raising the arm, with your other hand doing the work.

1. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head.
2. Hold the wrist of your operated arm with your other hand. Let the operated arm stay relaxed: your other hand does the lifting.
3. Raise the arm up and over towards your head, as far as is comfortable, then lower it slowly.
4. As it gets easier, let your other hand do less of the work.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

07 Wall slides

From 6 weeks: raising the arm, with the wall taking some of its weight.

1. Stand facing a smooth wall with a small cloth under your hands, or clean socks on them, so that they slide easily.
2. Place the little-finger edges of your hands against the wall, thumbs towards you.
3. Step towards the wall, pressing only lightly into it, and slide your hands up as comfort allows.
4. Relax, and slide back down to the start.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

08 Raising the arm on its own

From 6 weeks: lifting the arm with its own muscles, forwards and out to the side.

1. Start lying down: do the lying arm raises (exercise 06) with less and less help, until the arm lifts on its own.
2. When that is easy, do the same sitting, and then standing: raise the arm forwards as high as is comfortable, and lower it slowly.
3. Then raise it out to the side in the same way, with your thumb pointing up.
4. Use a mirror: if your shoulder hitches up towards your ear, go back to lifting with help for a while.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	START
10 of each	3 times a day	From 6 weeks

09 Reaching behind your back

From 8 weeks: regaining the movement you need to reach behind you, for example to tuck in a shirt.

1. Stand holding a towel behind your back, the operated hand at the lower end.
2. With your other hand, draw the towel up, so that the operated hand slides gently up your back.
3. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds, then relax. Never force it.

REPETITIONS	HOW OFTEN	HOLD	START
10	3 times a day	10 seconds	From 8 weeks

MOVING ON At about 12 weeks, once the arm moves comfortably without the shoulder hitching up.

FROM 12 WEEKS Phase 3: Getting stronger

Your physiotherapist will build up the strength and control of your shoulder, step by step, and prepare you for your sport. Push-ups, planks and bench press usually come back from about 3 to 4 months, starting light, with the hands about shoulder-width apart and the shoulder blades held back. Ease off if the arm becomes tired or sore.

What to expect

You will usually be seen in clinic roughly six weeks after your operation. Smoking slows healing, so stopping helps. Some stiffness is normal at first; if it is getting worse, not better, by 6 to 8 weeks, tell the clinic. The aim is a stable, comfortable shoulder that moves as freely and as far as it allows, which varies from person to person.

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