Travis Frantz, MD, FAAOS
Orthopedic Surgeon
Shoulder, Knee, & Sports Medicine
Indiana University Health Medical Group
Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery,
Indiana University
(317) 944-9400
sportsmedindiana.com

Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

Elbow Fracture ORIF Rehabilitation Protocol
(distal humerus, olecranon, radial head)

- **Weeks 0-2**
  - Most often the patient will be in a splint and sling until first post-op visit. If not, then proceed with plan below
- **Weeks 2-6**
  - Goals: prevent stiffness, decrease swelling/inflammation, and protect fixation
  - Depending on fracture, patient, and insurance, a hinged elbow brace may be used after removal of the splint
  - Start passive, active-assisted, and active elbow and wrist flexion/extension exercises and forearm pronation/supination exercises.
    - For olecranon fractures and osteotomies - no active extension until week 6; no resisted extension until week 12
  - Grip strengthening and full ROM of wrist and digits
  - Full ROM of shoulder; prevent stiffness from thumb to shoulder outside of the elbow
  - Modalities as needed for muscle stimulation, pain control, and edema control
  - No lifting heavier than a cup of coffee/glass of water; okay to use write, use keyboard, button shirt, etc.
  - If limitation in ROM is significant at 6 weeks (flexion <90 degrees or extensor lag >30 degrees) may consider progressive dynamic splinting. *Please notify surgeon to obtain prescription
- **Weeks 6-12**
  - Goals: improved swelling and pain, increase ROM, begin strengthening
  - Start manual upper extremity PNF exercises
  - Emphasize ROM and isometric exercises
  - Progress to early resistance exercises
  - Isokinetic program to start at week 8-9
  - Stretching and neuromuscular control exercises
  - No lifting heavier than 5-10lbs
  - Modalities as needed for muscle stimulation, pain control, and edema control
- **Weeks: 12+**
  - Goals: increase strength, return to work, sport and/or pre-injury functional level with minimal to no restrictions
  - Modify/progress muscular strengthening and conditioning
  - Work or sport specific strengthening
  - Work on improving functional/ADL tasks as needed
  - No lifting restriction, but increase weight gradually
  - Customized HEP to continue once PT/OT is completed

Physical therapy protocols, post-operative instructions, and other information can all be accessed at any time at *www.sportsmedindiana.com*