



## Lower Trapezius Tendon Transfer Rehabilitation Protocol

The following is a basic framework from which to work during rehabilitation following lower trapezius tendon transfer. This procedure is done for a massive irreparable rotator cuff tear in an active patient that wants to restore partial external rotation strength, and does not meet indications for reverse total shoulder arthroplasty. The lower trapezius is in-phase with the posterior rotator cuff, and is connected to the proximal humerus with a tendon allograft.

Every patient is different, so the time points are just guidelines – the emphasis should be on achieving the milestones of each phase prior to advancing to the next phase.  
Please feel free to communicate with our office with any questions or concerns.

	Range of Motion	Sling	Exercises
<b>Phase I</b> <b>0 – 8 weeks</b>	No shoulder ROM, in particular no internal rotation beyond neutral  No Codman's or pendulums	<b>0 – 6 weeks:</b> Remove only for dressing and hygiene, immobilized in maximum external rotation	Distal (elbow, wrist, hand) exercises only
<b>Phase II</b> <b>8 – 12 weeks</b>	Passive shoulder ER to tolerance  PROM into scapular plane elevation to 120°  Progress to AAROM, AROM with internal rotation limit to 0°	None	Continue distal Phase I exercises  Start gentle active scapular mobility exercises, keep shoulder girdle muscles relaxed  Gentle strengthening of scapular stabilizers  Avoid resisted training and shoulder strengthening
<b>Phase III</b> <b>12 – 16 weeks</b>	Gradually progress PROM and AROM of the shoulder with no limits	None	Continue Phase II exercises  Begin rotator cuff and shoulder isometric strengthening  Return to most activities of daily living with 5-lb. lifting limit





<b>Phase IV</b> <b>16 weeks – 6</b> <b>months</b>	Maintain full PROM and AROM	None	Continue Phase III exercises  Initiate isotonic strengthening with home rotator cuff strengthening program  Continue strengthening scapular stabilizers with focus on proper scapulohumeral mechanics  Simulate work/recreational activities as shoulder strength improves
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Adapted from Dr. Michael Fu postoperative rehab protocol

