

Distal Biceps Tendon Repair: Post-surgical Recovery Process, Expectations, and Timelines

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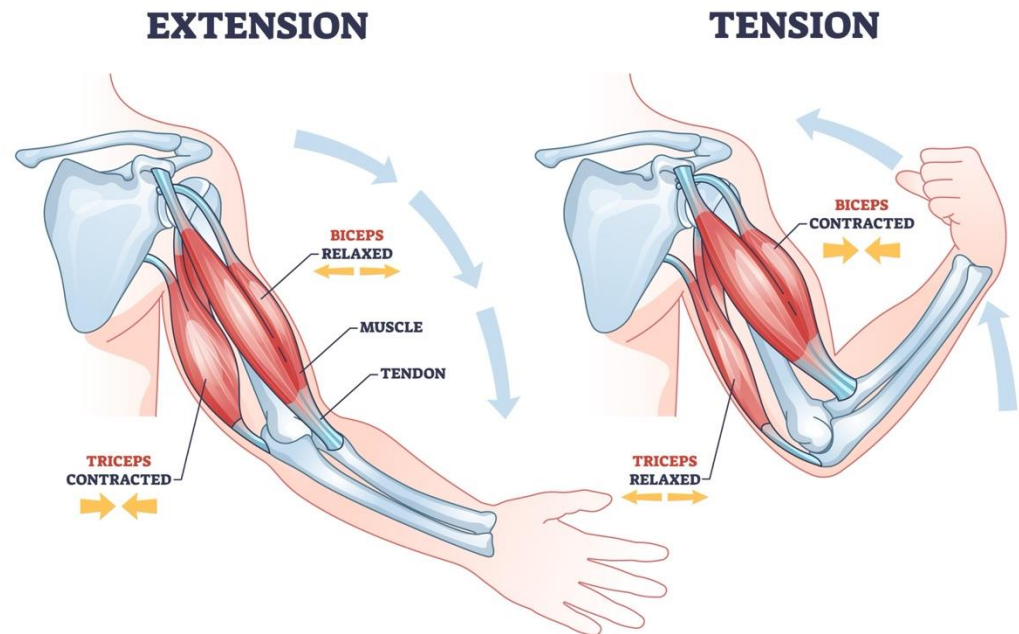
What is the Distal Biceps?

- **Attachment of biceps tendon into forearm**

- Biceps starts at top of shoulder joint
- Muscle runs in front of upper arm
- Tendon inserts into radius bone

- **What does the biceps muscle do?**

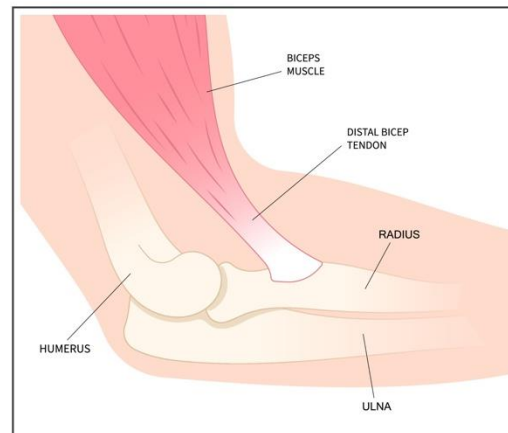
- Primary supinator - think opening jars, twisting screwdriver
- Assists with elbow flexion (bending)



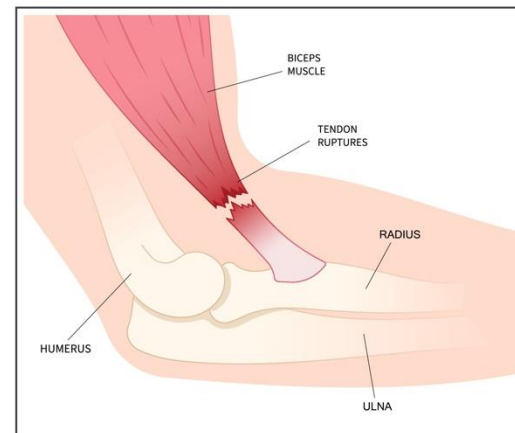
How and why does the Distal Biceps tear?

- Generally occurs to males over age 30
- Occurs during eccentric phase of lifting
 - Heavy weight is being lowered
 - Elbow forcefully pulled into extension/straightened
- Often pre-existing tendinopathy
 - Weakened tendon due to overuse, genetics, or combination of reasons

DISTAL BICEPS TENDON INJURY



HEALTHY TENDON



DISTAL BICEP RUPTURE

Indications for Distal Biceps Tendon Repair

- Repaired in most patients
 - Important for many occupations and some activities of daily living (ADLs)
- Restores supination strength
 - Opening jars
 - Turning screwdriver
 - Similar twisting/torquing motions
- Restores elbow flexion
 - Lifting/carrying objects
 - Forcefully bending elbow



How is Surgery Performed?

- 30-minute outpatient procedure
- General anesthesia + nerve block
- 1–2-inch incision on front of forearm just below elbow
- Torn tendon and muscle stitched and repaired to bone
 - One metal button
 - One suture anchor



Expectations for Day of Surgery

Day of Surgery: At Surgery Center

- Will arrive to surgery center approximately 2 hours prior to surgery
 - Surgery center will call with specific time day before surgery
- Nothing to eat or drink after midnight
- Shower with Hibiclens night before and morning of surgery
- Time at surgery center:
 - Before surgery: Check in, paperwork, IV placement, meet anesthesia team, nerve block (1-2 hours)
 - Surgery: Roll back to operating room, go to sleep, surgery performed, wake up (1 hour)
 - After surgery: Roll to recovery room. Pain will be controlled. Water and crackers administered. Roll to car for family member/friend to take you home.



Day of Surgery: Home

- Keep splint clean and dry, sling for support
 - Consider purchasing a cast cover (Amazon, Walgreens, CVS)
 - If no cast cover, keep dry with garbage bags and rubber bands
- Limit time on feet
- Light diet on day of surgery - avoid heavy/greasy foods
- Limit narcotic use – do not “stay ahead” of the pain
- Nerve block typically wears off 18-22 hours after administered
 - *Pain will increase, and you may require pain medication*



Day after Surgery: Home

- Resume your regular diet
- Start to increase time on feet/walking around
- May shower the day after surgery
 - Keep splint clean and dry until follow-up visit 2 weeks after surgery
 - Strongly recommend cast cover



Outpatient Physical Therapy
Start no sooner than 2 weeks after
Surgery

***Elbow brace will be placed at 2 week
visit***



Outpatient Physical Therapy

Make sure to call ahead, as they often book out weeks in advance

Goals of Physical Therapy

1. Control pain
2. Progressively regain full range of motion following protocol
3. Strengthen muscles around elbow (biceps strengthening @ 3 months)
4. Return to desired activity level

Please discuss goals with Physical Therapist

1. Specific job demands (i.e. manual labor job)
2. Fitness goals
3. Return to sport (competitive/recreational)

Expectations: Symptoms

Time after Surgery	0-2 weeks	2-6 weeks	6 wks-3 months	3-6 months	6 mos - 1 year
Difficulty sleeping					
Pain at rest					
Elbow stiffness	Full Motion by 6 weeks				
Weakness/Atrophy				Improvements out to one year postoperative	
Pain medication needed		NSAIDs/Tylenol	Minimal	None	None

Note: Recovery timelines are general expectations and vary from person to person based on a variety of factors including tear retraction, baseline strength and activity level, compliance with postoperative instructions including home exercises and physical therapy, and other health factors.

Expectations: Function

Activity	Immediately	2-6 weeks	6-12 weeks	3-4 months	4-6 months	6+ months
Texting and typing						
Driving						
Desk work (with sling*)		*				
Sleeping in recliner/upright						
Sleeping in bed						
Lifting 1-5 pounds						
Lifting 10+ pounds at/above shoulder height						
Basic housework (cleaning)						
Reaching a high shelf						
Light manual labor						
Heavy manual labor (discuss with MD)						
Sports (discuss with MD)						

Note: Recovery timelines are general expectations and vary from person to person based on a variety of factors including tear size/retraction, baseline strength and activity level, compliance with postoperative instructions

Questions?

Contact Brittany Lukaszewski, RN

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