



Indiana University Health

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Distal Bicep Tendon Repair

(Updated 1/2025)

General Post Op Instructions

Wound Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Dressings can be removed 2 days after surgery, or they can be removed at the first physical therapy appointment✓ If desired, incisions may be covered with simple dressings (band-aids)
Swelling	→ Swelling and bruising are to be expected after a surgical procedure
Ice and Elevate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Ice 20 minutes on 20 minutes off, several times a day to help with swelling✓ Do not place ice or cold back directly onto the skin✓ Elevate the limb above the heart when able
Showering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Do not soak incisions in water for 2 weeks→ You may begin to shower 2 days after surgery after dressings are removed<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Allow soapy water to run over the incision but do not scrub2. Dry, apply band-aids if needed
Driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Dr. Call does not release people to drive at a specific date or week post op✓ It is unlawful to drive under the influence of opioid (strong pain) medications✓ Must be able to safely apply the brakes before returning to drive✓ Driving in a brace/sling/boot is not recommended

Weight Bearing Restrictions and Brace Use

Week 0-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Brace locked at 70-90 degrees of elbow flexion at the time of surgery✓ Can remove for exercises and showering
Weeks 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Week 3: Brace unlocked to 30 degrees extension and full flexion✓ Week 4: Brace unlocked to 0 degrees extension (full extension) and full flexion
Weeks 4+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ DC hinged elbow brace

Immediate Post Operative Phase (up to week 4)

Overall Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Swelling reduction✓ Passive motion
Cautions	→ PROM only for the first 2 weeks, advancing to tension-free endpoints



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	→ Therapist may gradually unlock the brace in smaller degree increments within the parameters above
Range of Motion Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Weeks 0-2<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Passive pronation to 45 degrees○ Passive extension to 30 degrees✓ Week 3<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gentle AROM/PROM pronation to 60 degrees○ Gentle AROM/PROM extension to 15-20 degrees✓ Week 4<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Gentle AROM/PROM full pronation○ Gentle AROM/PROM full extension✓ Passive flexion and supination to degrees as pain allows
Therapeutic Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Hand gripping→ Wrist isometrics (no active supination or pronation)→ Shoulder shrugs/squeezes→ Triceps isometrics at 90 degrees of elbow flexion (in brace if needed)→ Scapular proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation→ Submax bicep isometrics at 90 degrees elbow flexion and neutral pronation (in brace if needed)
Progression Ready to Next Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Swelling reduced✓ Tolerating rehab

Intermediate Rehabilitation Phase (Weeks 5 – 8)

Overall Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Full elbow and forearm ROM by week 6✓ DC Brace
Cautions	→ No resisted flexion with operative arm
Range of Motion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Passive motion to all levels of tolerance✓ Progress to AROM in all planes starting week 6
Therapeutic Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Bicep/tricep isometrics at 60 and 90 degrees of elbow flexion→ Begin supination/pronation isometrics→ Begin therabands after week 6→ Start UBE at week 7→ Supination and pronation PREs→ Side lying ER→ Start 1 pound bicep resistance at week 8→ Periscapular isometrics



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Progression	✓	Tolerating PT progression
Ready to	✓	Pain free ROM
Next Phase		

Advance Strengthening Phase (Weeks 9 – 12)

Overall Goals	✓	Increase resistance strengthening
Cautions	→	Avoid too rapid progression
Range of Motion	✓	AROM in all planes as tolerated
Therapeutic Suggestions	→	Transition from theraband to light weight resistance exercises
	→	Periscapular
	→	Shoulder/forearm/wrist manuals
	→	Bicep/tricep manuals closer to week 12
	→	May start push ups
Progression	✓	Tolerating PT
Ready to		
Next Phase		

Late Rehabilitation and Strengthening Phase (Week 13 – 24)

Overall Goals	✓	Return to work and activities
Cautions	→	Let pain/discomfort dictate return progression
Range of Motion	✓	Unrestricted AROM
Therapeutic Suggestions	→	Add plyometrics
	→	Add sport specific and work specific exercises
Return to Work & Sports	✓	Return to work if patients feels they can perform job duties
	✓	Return to heavier weightlifting after 4 months
	✓	Some patients may need to wait until month 6 to return to work given their job requirements
