



Indiana University Health

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## Distal Bicep Tendon Repair

*(Updated 1/2025)*

### **General Post Op Instructions**

<b>Wound Care</b>	✓ 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)
<b>Swelling</b>	→ Swelling and bruising are to be expected after a surgical procedure
<b>Ice and Elevate</b>	✓ 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
<b>Showering</b>	→ Do not soak incisions in water for 2 weeks → You may begin to shower 2 days after surgery after dressings are removed 1. Allow soapy water to run over the incision but do not scrub 2. Dry, apply band-aids if needed
<b>Driving</b>	✓ 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	✓ Brace locked at 70-90 degrees of elbow flexion at the time of surgery ✓ Can remove for exercises and showering
Weeks 3-4	✓ 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+	✓ DC hinged elbow brace

### **Immediate Post Operative Phase (up to week 4)**

<b>Overall Goals</b>	✓ Swelling reduction ✓ Passive motion
<b>Cautions</b>	→ 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

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<b>Range of Motion Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Weeks 0-2<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Passive pronation to 45 degrees</li><li>○ Passive extension to 30 degrees</li></ul></li><li>✓ Week 3<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Gentle AROM/PROM pronation to 60 degrees</li><li>○ Gentle AROM/PROM extension to 15-20 degrees</li></ul></li><li>✓ Week 4<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Gentle AROM/PROM full pronation</li><li>○ Gentle AROM/PROM full extension</li></ul></li><li>✓ Passive flexion and supination to degrees as pain allows</li></ul>
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<b>Therapeutic Suggestions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ Hand gripping</li><li>→ Wrist isometrics (no active supination or pronation)</li><li>→ Shoulder shrugs/squeezes</li><li>→ Triceps isometrics at 90 degrees of elbow flexion (in brace if needed)</li><li>→ Scapular proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation</li><li>→ Submax bicep isometrics at 90 degrees elbow flexion and neutral pronation (in brace if needed)</li></ul>
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<b>Progression Ready to Next Phase</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Swelling reduced</li><li>✓ Tolerating rehab</li></ul>
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## Intermediate Rehabilitation Phase (Weeks 5 – 8)

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



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

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### Advance Strengthening Phase (Weeks 9 – 12)

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**Overall Goals**    ✓ Increase resistance strengthening

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**Cautions**       → Avoid too rapid progression

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**Range of Motion**    ✓ AROM in all planes as tolerated

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**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

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**Progression**    ✓ Tolerating PT

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**Ready to**

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**Next Phase**

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### Late Rehabilitation and Strengthening Phase (Week 13 – 24)

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**Overall Goals**    ✓ Return to work and activities

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**Cautions**       → Let pain/discomfort dictate return progression

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**Range of Motion**    ✓ Unrestricted AROM

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**Therapeutic Suggestions**    → Add plyometrics  
                               → Add sport specific and work specific exercises

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**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

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