

ARTHROSCOPIC ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR

What Can I Expect?

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What is the rotator cuff?

The rotator cuff is made up of four muscles and their tendons (Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, Subscapularis & Teres Minor) that surround the shoulder joint. When you raise or rotate your arm the rotator cuff helps to power these motions and to stabilize the ball (humeral head) of the shoulder within the socket (glenoid).

How do you repair the rotator cuff?

The rotator cuff will be repaired by making a 3-4 inch incision across the top or front of the shoulder. Dr. Ko uses suture to sew the rotator cuff back to the correct (anatomic) position.

Length of Stay

Typically, this is an outpatient surgery and you should go home the same day of the surgery. You will need to have someone who can take you home.

Anesthesia

Patients usually have two types of anesthesia for this surgery. The first is general anesthesia, which means you are asleep and unaware during the surgery. The second type of anesthesia is a nerve block which numbs the operative arm. The nerve block will last about 12-18 hours and during this period you will not be able to control your arm and it will feel strange to you. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist.

Incisions

You will have a moderate sized 3-4 inch incision on the top or on the front of your shoulder (depending on the location of your tear). Once the incision has healed, it is typically not very noticeable.

Pain

All surgical procedures are associated with some discomfort and all patients perceive pain differently. In general, the pain associated with this procedure is well controlled with the pain medication that will be prescribed for you prior to discharge. After the nerve block wears off you will have discomfort. Most of the pain is related to your very swollen shoulder. That swelling will resolve in 24-48 hours.

Sling

Your arm will be placed in a sling prior to leaving the operating room. You are to remain in your sling 24 hours a day. This includes sleeping in your sling. For the four weeks that you are in your sling, **you are not permitted to drive.**

Dressings

You will go home with tape and gauze dressings. After 2 days you may remove the dressings. You may see some blue suture (stitch) sticking out the ends of the incision. The suture will be removed at your first postoperative visit 10-14 days after your surgery.

Physical Therapy

For the first three months of recovery you will do these very gentle stretches at home. The second three months you will continue to do your home exercises and also attend formal physical therapy.

Restrictions

Recovery from rotator cuff repair surgery is six months. During that time you will have restrictions on the use of your operative arm.

- First 6 weeks:** no use of arm, out of work
- Months 1-3:** opposite hand work only
- Months 3-4.5:** no lifting and carrying anything greater than 10 lbs and only occasional over shoulder reaching
- Months 4.5-6:** no lifting and carrying anything greater than 20 lbs