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Distal Triceps Tendon Repair

Phase 1: Protection Phase (0–2 weeks)

Goals

- Protect surgical repair
- Control pain and swelling
- Maintain shoulder, wrist, and hand motion

Immobilization

- Posterior splint or hinged elbow brace
- Elbow typically positioned **30–45° flexion or as per Dr. Levin**

Activity

- **No active elbow extension**
- **No passive elbow flexion beyond brace limit**

Exercises

- Hand gripping
- Wrist flexion/extension
- Forearm pronation/supination (with elbow supported)
- Shoulder pendulum exercises
- Scapular retraction

Precautions

- No pushing
- No weight bearing through the arm
- Avoid elbow flexion past restriction

Phase 2: Early Motion (2–6 weeks)

Goals

- Gradually restore elbow ROM
- Prevent stiffness while protecting repair

Brace

- Hinged elbow brace with progressive ROM limits

Typical progression:

Week Flexion Limit

2–3 0–60°

3–4 0–90°

4–5 0–110°

5–6 0–120°

Exercises

- Passive and assisted elbow flexion
- Passive elbow extension to brace limit
- Continue wrist/hand/shoulder ROM
- Gentle scapular strengthening

Still Avoid

- Active elbow extension
- Resisted elbow extension
- Weight bearing

Phase 3: Active Motion (6–10 weeks)

Goals

- Restore full ROM
- Initiate triceps activation

Brace

- Gradually discontinue

Exercises

- **Active elbow extension without resistance**
- Active elbow flexion
- Light functional use of arm
- Isometric triceps (around week 8)

ROM Goal

- Near full ROM by **8–10 weeks**

Precautions

- No resisted extension yet
 - Avoid pushing movements
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Phase 4: Strengthening Phase (10–16 weeks)

Goals

- Build triceps strength
- Restore upper extremity function

Exercises

- Light resisted triceps extension
- Theraband exercises
- Closed chain activities (wall push-ups → modified push-ups)
- Biceps strengthening
- Shoulder strengthening

Progression

- Increase resistance gradually
 - Focus on endurance and control
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Phase 5: Advanced Strengthening / Return to Activity (4–6 months)

Goals

- Restore full strength
- Return to sport/work

Exercises

- Push-ups
- Bench press (light → moderate)
- Plyometric upper extremity drills (athletes)
- Sport-specific training

Return to heavy lifting/contact sports

- Typically **5–6 months**

Key Precautions

Avoid early **eccentric triceps loading**, which is the most common cause of repair failure.

High-risk movements early include:

- Push-ups
- Bench press
- Rising from chair with arms
- Falling onto the hand with elbow flexed

Expected Recovery Timeline

Milestone	Time
Passive ROM started	2 weeks
Active extension allowed	6 weeks
Strengthening begins	10–12 weeks
Return to heavy activity	5–6 months