
Shoulder Surgery: Return To Work Guidelines

Return of function and return to work may be prolonged after shoulder surgery depending upon the degree of physical activity that your job entails. These are general guidelines and timeframes regarding recovery and return to work after common surgical procedures of the shoulder and should be used as such.

Returning to work – Acromioplasty and Bursectomy

- For most sedentary jobs, one week off work is recommended after surgery.
- When you return to work your arm will be sore but you should be able to manage as long as you do no heavy lifting, pushing, pulling or carrying.
- Work at waist level and 5-10 pounds of lifting is started 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- Heavier lifting and work at or above shoulder level starts 1-2 months after surgery.
- You will generally need 3-4 months before recovery is complete and return to heavy lifting or prolonged overhead use may require 6-9 months.

Returning to work – Rotator Cuff and Labral Repairs

- For most sedentary jobs, one to two weeks off work is recommend.
- When you return to work your arm will be in a sling (for 4-6 weeks after surgery), but you should be able to manage as long as you do no lifting, pushing, pulling or carrying.
- Light duty work involving no lifting, pushing, pulling or carrying may begin within four weeks after surgery.
- Work at waist level lifting 5-10 pounds can begin 3-4 months after surgery.
- Work at shoulder level can begin 3-6 months after surgery.
- Heavy lifting or overhead use may require 6-12 months before full recovery and work return.