

## Reverse Total Shoulder Arthroplasty (RTSA) Rehabilitation Protocol

### Key Surgical Considerations

RTSA relies on the deltoid for elevation rather than the rotator cuff. Early rehab protects the prosthesis, avoids dislocation vectors (adduction + internal rotation + extension), and gradually restores controlled motion.

### PHASE I — Protection & Passive ROM (0–6 Weeks)

- PROM only: FE 0–90°, ER 0–20–30°, ABD 0–75°.
- Sling with abduction pillow (except hygiene/therapy).
- No active shoulder ROM.
- No lifting any weight.
- Avoid adduction + IR + extension behind the back.

**Goal:** protect prosthesis and soft tissues.

### PHASE II — AAROM → AROM & Early Deltoid Activation (6–12 Weeks)

- Begin AAROM: pulleys, wand, wall slides.
- Transition to AROM: supine → incline → standing.
- Begin deltoid isometrics.
- Scapular strengthening: rows, serratus punches.
- Avoid lifting >2–3 lbs.

**Goal:** reestablish controlled shoulder elevation.

### PHASE III — Functional Strengthening (12–18 Weeks)

- Progressive resistance: bands → 1–5 lb weights.
- Strengthen deltoid and scapular stabilizers (Y/T/W).
- Light ER/IR strengthening at neutral.
- Closed-chain stability: wall weight shifts.
- Avoid lifting >10 lbs.

**Goal:** restore functional strength and movement patterns.

### PHASE IV — Advanced Strengthening & Return to Activity (4–6 Months)

- Increase resistance 3–8 lbs.
- Light overhead strengthening.
- Functional lifting patterns and kinetic-chain training.
- Avoid heavy overhead loads.

**Goal:** return to daily and recreational activities.

### PHASE V — Maintenance & Long-Term Function (6–12 Months)

- Maintain deltoid and scapular strength.
- Return to recreational activities as tolerated.

- Long-term limit: avoid heavy overhead lifting >25–30 lbs.

**Goal:** safe, sustained shoulder function.

### **Selected References**

1. Boileau P, et al. Reverse total shoulder arthroplasty: indications and outcomes. *J Shoulder Elbow Surg.* 2. Werthel JD, et al. Rehabilitation after reverse shoulder arthroplasty: current concepts. *Orthop Clin North Am.* 3. Cuff D, Pupello D. Functional outcomes after reverse shoulder arthroplasty. *J Bone Joint Surg Am.* 4. Stephens SP, et al. Early rehabilitation considerations after reverse total shoulder arthroplasty. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.*

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