DR. KAISEN YAO, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SPORTS MEDICINE SURGEON

Post-Operative Physical Therapy Protocol

Distal Bicep Tendon Repair

Northwell Health • Department of Orthopedic Surgery & Sports Medicine • Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

Patient Name	Date of Surgery	Prescribing Surgeon
		Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

General Guidelines & Precautions

- Wear the brace as prescribed — typically limiting terminal elbow extension in the early weeks — to protect the repair while it heals.
- Avoid resisted elbow flexion and forearm supination until cleared by the surgeon.
- Prioritize swelling control with ice, compression, and elevation.
- Contact the surgeon for fever, excessive drainage, increasing redness, uncontrolled pain, or new numbness or tingling in the forearm or hand.

PHASE I
Immediate Post-Op Protection

TIMEFRAME
WEEKS 0–2

Goals:
Protect the repair, control pain and swelling, and maintain wrist/hand mobility.

Precautions:
Brace locked or limited per surgeon protocol, typically blocking terminal extension; no active elbow flexion or forearm supination, and no lifting.

Interventions:
Cryotherapy, compression, elevation, gentle wrist and hand range of motion and grip work, and passive elbow motion only within the brace's allowed range as directed.

Criteria to Progress:
Incision healing well and pain controlled.

PHASE II

Progressive Extension & Motion

TIMEFRAME

WEEKS 2–6

Goals:
Gradually increase elbow extension in the brace per protocol, and progress toward full passive and active range of motion.

Interventions:
Progressive brace extension adjustments per surgeon schedule, active-assisted and active range of motion within allowed limits, and gentle forearm rotation as cleared.

Precautions:
Continue to avoid resisted flexion/supination and heavy lifting.

Criteria to Progress:
Progressing range of motion per protocol and minimal pain with motion.

PHASE III

Strengthening

TIMEFRAME

WEEKS 6–12

Goals:
Restore full range of motion and begin progressive strengthening of the biceps and surrounding musculature.

Interventions:
Progressive resistance exercises for elbow flexion and forearm supination, wrist and grip strengthening, and functional lifting progression as tolerated.

Criteria to Progress:
Full range of motion, improving strength, and no pain with progressive loading.

PHASE IV

Advanced Strengthening & Return to Activity

TIMEFRAME

3–6 MONTHS

Goals:
Restore full strength and endurance, and return to unrestricted work, recreation, or sport.

Interventions:
Heavy resistance training, sport- or task-specific strengthening, and progressive return to lifting.

Return to Sport/Work:
Return to heavy lifting or contact sports should follow surgeon and therapist clearance based on strength testing.

Discharge Criteria:
Full pain-free range of motion, strength approaching the uninvolved side, and safe mechanics with functional and sport-specific tasks.

This protocol is a general guideline. Extension limits and loading progression should be individualized by the treating physical therapist in coordination with Dr. Yao's office based on repair technique and tissue quality.