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Rehabilitation After Elbow Release Surgery

The goal of elbow release surgery is to restore motion and function to a stiff and painful elbow. During the operation, we will attempt to optimize your elbow's motion by balancing the soft tissues around your joint and freeing-up any adhesions and contractures. The smoothness of your joint may have also been improved by removal of loose bodies and other abnormalities.

Following surgery, the responsibility is yours to maintain the motion that was achieved with a simple, but vitally important series of exercises. Our highest priority is maintaining your elbow motion. We use a motion machine (CPM) immediately after surgery to move the arm gently through an arc of motion. Splints are used to stretch the tissues without causing pain.

This rehabilitation program focuses on elbow flexion (bending) and extension (straightening). Some patients will also focus on forearm pronation and supination (rotating your palm up and down). It is essential that the program below be performed as written. If not, your elbow will become stiff again very quickly. Maintaining the range of motion gained at surgery is essential to restoring your arm function. Strengthening exercises are avoided until you have achieved full elbow motion and comfort.

Elbow disability cannot be reversed without persistent work on range of motion, strength, and coordination. Maximum benefit following elbow release surgery is usually achieved by 6 months after surgery. A strong commitment to your exercise program and rehabilitation is the most important factor in ensuring you achieve this goal.