

Expectations for Distal Biceps Tendon Repair Surgery



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What is a Distal Biceps Tendon Rupture?

A distal biceps tendon rupture occurs when the tendon connecting your biceps muscle to the radius bone in your forearm tears or detaches. This injury often happens suddenly with lifting or a sudden movement. Not repairing the tendon leads to significant loss of strength in flexing the elbow and rotating the forearm, reducing the ability to perform everyday tasks.

Why is Surgery Needed?

The surgery repairs the torn tendon and restores its attachment to the bone. Reattaching the bone restores the strength and function of your biceps muscle.

What to Expect Before Surgery

This procedure is done on an outpatient basis, so you will go home the same day.

The surgery is typically done under regional anesthesia and light sedation. This means that your arm is numbed by the anesthesiologist using a technique called a brachial plexus block. This will numb and relax the muscles of your arm from the shoulder down for several hours. You will also have conscious sedation, which means you will sleep through the procedure. You will be breathing on your own, but intubation (inserting a tube into the throat) is not typically required for this surgery. You will not feel any pain during surgery, and it

would be unusual for you to remember anything during surgery.

Post-Surgery: Your arm will remain numb for several hours, typically lasting around 12 hours from surgery.

What to Expect During the Surgery

The surgery itself usually takes about 30 minutes, but patients spend several hours at the surgery center/hospital for surgical preparation and post-operative recovery time.

An incision is made on the forearm to access the ruptured tendon. The tendon is located and pulled down to its original attachment point on the radius. A hole is drilled in the radius. The tendon is then attached with suture to a surgical button which is passed into the hole in the radius, securing the tendon in place.

The incision is closed with dissolving sutures.

What to Expect After the Surgery

POST-SURGERY CARE

- **Dressing:** After the surgery, your arm will be in a soft cast/splint from your upper arm to your hand. You will keep this dressing on until your first post-op appointment.
- **Sling:** You will need to wear a sling at all times except for bathing until you return for follow-up. No lifting until the first follow-up appointment.
- **Bathing:** You may bathe as long as the dressing stays dry.

FOLLOW-UP AND THERAPY

- **First Post-Op Visit:** After seeing your doctor, you will see hand therapy where a custom removable splint will be made, and you will begin therapy exercises. **Please note that our office will schedule you a therapy appointment at the same time as your first post-operative appointment, so you will receive a call from our office confirming this appointment.** Therapy is required for several weeks to help regain motion and strength in your arm.
- **Activity Restrictions:**
 - You will have a lifting restriction of 5 pounds for 3 months after surgery. During this 3-month period, the tendon is literally held to the bone by thread, so the tendon must be protected to ensure that it will heal.
 - After 3 months, you can begin strengthening and lifting more than 5 pounds with a few important exceptions.
 - Until 6 months from surgery, you must avoid lifting awkward shaped objects where you have to reach your arms around the object to lift them. These objects include TVs, couches, tires and anything that requires you to reach your arms wider than 18 inches apart.
 - You must avoid particular weightlifting exercises including deadlifts, power/hang cleans, snatches, and pullups until 6 months from surgery.

For more information on hand and wrist conditions and treatments, visit www.handcare.org.

If you have any questions, the most efficient way to contact us is via the messaging portal on MyChart. The Bogle team works on checking and answering these messages throughout the workday to get back with you as quickly as possible. **After hours and on weekends** (outside of 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday) please call 804-379-2414 to speak with the on-call provider.



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