

Distal Biceps Tendon Injury

Explanation of Diagnosis

A distal biceps tendon tear occurs when the tendon that connects the biceps muscle to the radius bone in the forearm is partially or completely torn. This usually happens due to a sudden forceful load on the arm, such as lifting something heavy. Symptoms include a sharp pain in the front of the elbow, swelling, bruising, weakness in forearm rotation (supination).

Complete tears often require surgical repair for full strength recovery, while partial tears may be managed conservatively with bracing and rehabilitation.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid** lifting anything heavy with the affected arm, especially with the palm facing up.
- **Limit** repetitive gripping, pulling, or twisting motions.
- If using tools or machinery, consider switching to the opposite arm or using adaptive equipment.
- Wear an elbow brace if needed for support.
- Take frequent breaks to prevent fatigue and further strain.

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid** weightlifting, pull-ups, or any activity requiring strong elbow flexion (bending the arm against resistance).
- **Modify** sports (e.g., golf, tennis, or baseball) by using the opposite arm when possible and avoiding sudden pulling motions.
- For activities like cycling or playing an instrument, adjust positioning to reduce strain on the elbow.
- **Reintroduce** activities gradually, starting with low-resistance movements.

Recommended Supplements

- **Collagen peptides (10 g daily)** - Supports tendon healing.
- **Vitamin C (500 mg daily)** - Aids collagen synthesis for tendon repair.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces inflammation.
- **Magnesium (300-400 mg daily)** - Helps muscle relaxation and recovery.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Protein-rich foods** (chicken, fish, eggs, lentils) to support muscle and tendon repair.
- **Anti-inflammatory foods** (berries, leafy greens, turmeric, nuts) to reduce swelling.
- **Vitamin C and collagen-boosting foods** (citrus fruits, bell peppers, bone broth) to aid tendon recovery.
- **Limit processed foods** and excessive sugar, which can slow healing.

Hydration Tips:

- Drink **at least 2-3 liters of water daily** to maintain tissue hydration.
- Avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine, which can impair healing.

Home Exercise Prescription

For **non-surgical cases or post-surgery rehab (only as advised by a physician)**:

1. **Passive Elbow Flexion/Extension** - Gently bend and straighten the elbow **10 reps, 3 times daily** (if pain allows).
2. **Wrist Supination/Pronation Stretch** - Rotate the palm up and down **10 reps, 3 times daily** without resistance.
3. **Isometric Biceps Hold (if cleared by a doctor)** - Press against a wall with the palm up and hold **for 5 seconds, 10 reps**.
4. **Grip Strength Exercise** - Squeeze a soft stress ball **10 reps, 3 times daily** to maintain hand strength.

Avoid heavy resistance or pulling exercises until cleared by a physician.

Helpful Books

1. *"Framework for the Shoulder: A Practical Guide to Preventing Injury and Returning to Activity"* - Nicholas A. Dinubile, MD
2. *"Rebuilding Milo: The Lifter's Guide to Fixing Common Injuries and Building a Strong Foundation"* - Aaron Horschig

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Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.