

5 Steps to Successful Rotator Cuff Recovery

When the rotator cuff is injured or repaired, all four of its muscles need not just strengthening, but retraining. The goal is a full, pain-free range of motion and the shoulder strength to support everything you do.



1 Injury & Acute Phase

Start Now

Protect & Calm Down



What progress looks like:

- Ice, activity modification, and proper positioning protect healing tissue and keep the window open for earlier movement. By managing pain, you calm the cycle of inflammation that delays recovery.
- Your current pain level determines what’s safe. A pain score above 3/10 during exercise is a signal to back off. Differentiating pain from fatigue is one of the first things your PT will teach you.
- While you are managing symptoms, a PT is being matched to your case, coordinating with your provider so that care begins the day you’re ready.

2 Activation Phase

Start Early

Reconnect Your Muscles



What progress looks like:

- Rotator cuff muscles often “shut down” after injury or surgery. Gentle isometrics and scapular setting begin re-establishing the brain-to-muscle signals that allow controlled, safe movement.
- Relearning movement at home adds benefits. The brain forms stronger, more lasting movement patterns when exercises are practiced in the exact environment where the shoulder needs to perform.
- Your Luna PT assesses posture, scapular mechanics, and shoulder positioning in your home, identifying compensations before they become habits that place incorrect loads on healing tissue.

3 Motion Phase

Start Fresh Each Session

In-Home PT



What progress looks like:

- Your Luna PT comes to you and guides exercises matched precisely to your current tissue irritability level, progressing only as symptoms allow.
- Passive range of motion comes before active strengthening. Forward flexion, external rotation, and abduction stretches are performed first to restore mobility. Strengthening before an adequate range of motion is one of the most common mistakes in shoulder recovery.
- Session frequency is the key variable: 4–6 visits over 6–12 weeks, spaced every other week to allow sufficient neural adaptation between sessions.

4 Conditioning Phase

Start Fresh Each Week

Make PT part of your routine



What progress looks like:

- Progressive external and internal rotation, scapular stability work, and exercises rebuild the integrated four-muscle system that keeps the humeral head centered in the socket.
- Proprioception training restores your shoulder’s sense of its own position in space. This invisible layer of protection is what prevents re-injury long after formal PT ends.
- Your Luna PT coaches sleeping position, lifting mechanics, ergonomics, and posture correction in your home, the functional carryover that protects the shoulder across every hour of the day, not just during exercise sessions.

5 Active Life Phase

Start Fresh Each Day

Recovery is Ongoing



What progress looks like:

- For surgical rotator cuff injury, consistent PT resolves most cases in 6–12 months, and that timeline is largely determined by the consistency of your home program between sessions.
- Maintaining shoulder strength and flexibility 2–3 days per week is the evidence-based maintenance standard. The exercises that restored your shoulder are the same exercises that protect it from here forward.
- Luna’s support doesn’t end at discharge. An ongoing PT relationship is what protects the shoulder you’ve worked to rebuild and keeps you doing what matters most.