

Post-Operative Instructions: Upper Extremity Hardware Removal

1. You may remove your dressing after 48-72 hours. Do not get it wet before this. After this period, you may shower, but do not submerge or soak the incision sites. The steristrips will likely remain on until your follow up appt. Pat, do not rub, to dry over them. Cover with a dry dressing as needed.
2. Post-operative bleeding is not unusual. Reinforcing your dressing is all right. If you have concerns about the amount of bleeding, please call the office. If you had a block at the time of surgery, expect your arm to be very weak, partially paralyzed and numb during the first day. The function should return steadily by the next day. Do not remove your sling until this happens.
3. Wear sling at all times. It may be removed for exercises, showering and clothing changes, or when you are at rest, only as directed. Keep your arm at the side for showering and clothing changes.
4. Use your cold therapy unit, if you have one, or ice on the shoulder as directed until you are seen in the office. Wear it over your clothing regularly for 2 days. Change the water every 4 hours while awake. After 2 days wear it for 20 minutes at a time for at least 2 times per day.
5. Your post-operative therapy begins on the day of surgery. Elbow and wrist range of motion exercises should begin on the first post-operative day. You should perform these exercises 4 times per day as tolerated to maintain full elbow and wrist motion. Other exercises may be prescribed by your physician as well. You may remove the sling to do pendulum exercises, in which you bend forward at the waist and swing the arm as it dangles under you one way and then the other. You may elevate your arm, but do not do this with any weight more than the weight of your arm.

6. Do not lift more than 5 lbs. for 6 weeks. Any shoulder motion other than that described in #5 should be strictly passive and carried out by a Physical Therapist. Your therapist will have specific instructions guiding your therapy. At 4-6 weeks the bone is usually healed enough to begin active-assisted and active range of motion. Strengthening of the muscles usually begins about 6 weeks from surgery and continues for 2-3 months. Return to pre-injury activity is usually acquired in 2-3 months.
7. Post-operative pain should be controlled by the prescriptions given to you. As pain improves you should transition from the Norco to Tylenol and/or Motrin. With regard to pain medication, you should try to wean off of the strong pain medication prescribed at the time of surgery. Most patients can switch to extra-strength Tylenol after the first 2 weeks.
8. If you have a fever over 101.5°, shaking, chills or increasing pain after 3-4 days past surgery, please contact us or go to the Emergency Room. Moderate pain is expected for a week or so but should gradually diminish.
9. You will be seen in the office 10-14 days after surgery for follow-up. If you have any problems or questions please call us at (607) 734-4110.