

Riverview Health Orthopedics and Sports Medicine

SCOTT A SMITH, MD
POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS
HAND/ELBOW SURGERY
www.scottasmithmd.com



YOUR POSTOPERATIVE APPOINTMENT

_____/_____/_____ AT _____

WEIGHT BEARING STATUS

_____ Non Weight Bearing - do not put pressure through your wrist / elbow

SLING/SPLINT STATUS

- You may be placed in a splint or cast after surgery. It is important to not get this wet to prevent infection. Leave the splint intact until followup.
- You may wiggle your fingers
- You may use your hand as tolerated, but no lifting

WOUND CARE

- Keep the splint on until followup
- Do not get splint wet

PAIN MANAGEMENT

- You will receive a prescription for pain medication upon discharge--take as directed
- Common side effects are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. Consider taking the medication with food. Try an over the counter laxative for constipation if necessary
- Do not operate a motor vehicle or heavy machinery while on narcotic pain medication
- When taking your pain medication to not consume alcohol, tylenol products, or any other pain meds

OTHER IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

- It is very important to elevate your arm after surgery to prevent swelling
- Avoid long periods of sitting, bed rest, or travel for the first two weeks after surgery as this can contribute to developing blood clots
- Do not drive until cleared by your physician
- The effects of anesthesia may linger after your surgery and can cause drowsiness, nausea, and vomiting
- You may be placed on aspirin 81 mg twice daily to prevent blood clots. Take this until you have no more pills left

EMERGENCY CARE

- Contact Dr. Smith's office (317-770-3777) if you experience any of the following:
 - Calf pain, chest pain, or shortness of breath
 - Fever over 101 degrees (low grade fever after surgery is common)
 - Spreading redness, excessive pus-like or bloody drainage from incisions
 - Painful swelling or numbness
 - Unrelenting pain
 - Excessive nausea or vomiting
- If you experience a life-threatening emergency, go to the nearest emergency room as soon as possible

PRECAUTIONS

- After anesthesia, rest for 24 hours. General anesthesia may cause a sore throat, jaw discomfort or muscle aches. These symptoms can last for one or two days. **Do not drive, drink alcoholic beverages or make any important or legal decisions during this time.**
- Keep your first few meals after surgery light and drink plenty of fluids, and some people are nauseous after surgery.
- **Smoking increases your risk of infection and can delay healing times. If you smoke, you are encouraged to quit, cut back or at least quit smoking during the post-operative period.**
- Pain medications are important for the first few days after surgery to treat postoperative pain. Addiction, tolerance, and side effects are a big concern. Decrease the pain medications as soon as you can. This is typically after the first few days. Most patients require narcotic pain medications only for the first few weeks after surgery (even large procedures). Prolonged use increases the risk of problems with these medications.

MOST COMMON POST-OPERATIVE CONCERNS

- **Pain** - It is important to start your pain medication as soon as you can after surgery, even if you are not experiencing any pain. If you receive a block and when the block wears off, there can be a heightened sense of pain. If this occurs, understand that this can be normal. You may also add in Advil (ibuprofen) or Tylenol (acetaminophen) for added pain relief.
- **Swelling** - Due to surgery, fluid may build up in your knee. Due to gravity the swelling may move to your hand. This is normal. Your body will naturally reabsorb the fluid over the first 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- **Nausea** - The pain medication can cause nausea/vomiting. It is suggested to take pain medication with food. We will also prescribe anti-nausea medication (ondansetron/promethazine). It is recommended to take this before taking pain medication.
- **Constipation** - Pain medication can also cause constipation. We also prescribed constipation medication (docusate). It is recommended to take this medication, and plenty of water, the first few days after surgery until you have your first few bowel movements. If you have not had a bowel movement within 5 days after surgery, you can pick up over the counter Milk of Magnesia at any pharmacy. Make sure you stay hydrated.
- **Sleeping** - Due to the pain, lack of sleep is a very common concern after surgery. We also suggest scheduling your pain medication so that you are taking it before bed if possible. The pain medication may cause you to be drowsy. We also suggest taking tylenol PM, Advil PM, or melatonin to assist with sleep.
- **Spasms** - Due to surgery, you may experience muscle spasms or cramps around your arm. This is completely normal. If this happens, we suggest using a heating pad around these muscles for 20 minutes every hour when the cramping occurs. This will help relax the muscle.

- **Numbness/Tingling** - Due to swelling, you may notice some numbness and or tingling in your arm on the surgical side. This is normal and should decrease over time. If it fails to improve, please let us know
- **Driving** - We do not recommend driving immediately after surgery. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO, then you can not be taking narcotics, you cannot drive a manual shift car, and you have to be able to safely operate your vehicle.

NOTIFY THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY, 317-770-3777, IF YOU DEVELOP ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Increased redness or swelling over the incision area
- Incision area is warm or hot to touch
- Incision has foul smelling drainage
- Relentless pain, nausea, vomiting, bleeding or drainage
- Severe calf pain or chest pain
- You develop a fever greater than 101.4 more than 48 hours after surgery

If you are having an emergency that requires immediate attention go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

Please contact the office with any other questions or concerns that you may have regarding your surgery at 317-770-3777