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Post-op Instructions for Rotator Cuff Repair

These instructions compliment the information given by the nursing staff and Physical Therapists. They cover many common questions.

Wound Care

- Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. Reinforce the dressing as needed with additional gauze and tape. You may change the dressing daily starting 3 days after surgery with dry gauze and securing with tape. You may remove the steri-strips as they become loose. Continue daily dressing changes until the incisions have no drainage for 24 hours.
- You may get the incisions wet when showering 3 days after surgery. The shower should be brief, and the wounds patted dry with a clean towel. No baths or soaking the incision until 2 weeks after surgery and scabs are absent. You may remove the sling and pillow to shower and replace it with a rolled towel or empty milk jug for comfort while showering. You may also bend at the waist and gently dangle your arm to wash and dry underneath it.
- If you notice purulent drainage (thick white or greenish in color) from the wound, increasing redness, or you have a temperature of 101 or higher, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

Pain

- Ice your shoulder as frequently as possible. We recommend 4-5 times per day for 20 minutes per time. You may use either the ice machine given to you at the hospital or simply place ice in a zip lock bag, wrap it in a towel, and place it on the shoulder. Do not apply ice directly to the skin as it may damage the skin if left on for long periods of time.
- Swelling is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the hand above the heart level for the first 2-5 days after surgery. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon.
- For baseline pain control, we recommend adults take Tylenol (Acetaminophen) 1000mg* three times a day. If your prescription pain medication also contains Tylenol, you should reduce this. You should not take more than 3000mg of Tylenol in a 24-hour period. You may also supplement your pain medication by taking an anti-inflammatory medication such as Ibuprofen (Advil) or Naprosyn (Aleve) between Tylenol doses (unless you have been told you cannot take these medications, are taking a blood thinner or have a history of or develop stomach ulceration).
- If that is not adequate, prescription strength pain medication may be prescribed for after you leave the hospital. Wean off this medication as your pain allows, continuing the Tylenol and anti-inflammatory as tolerated. Prescription strength medications can cause constipation and you may want to use a stool softener. If a refill is needed, please call the office during regular business hours, Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Refills will not be made after hours or on weekends, so please plan ahead.

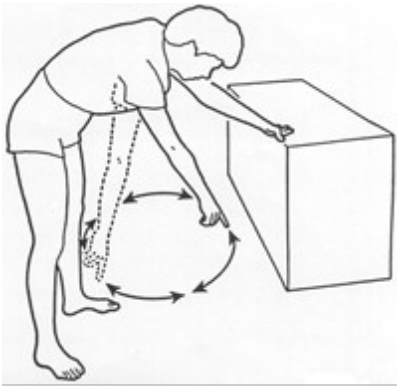
*Tylenol 325mg: 3 tabs every 8 hours OR Tylenol 500mg: 2 tabs every 8 hours

Driving

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol is allowed). Also, you must feel strong and alert. You may take your arm out of the sling to hold the bottom of the steering wheel, you should NOT actively raise your arm until cleared by physical therapy. Most people start driving approximately two-four weeks after surgery.

Exercises

- You will be in a sling for 4-6 weeks after surgery. Keep your arm in the sling except for showering or doing your exercises. You may adjust the sling as needed to make it more comfortable. You may be able to remove the pillow at 3-4 weeks after surgery. Your surgeon and Physical Therapist will help you determine when you can stop using the sling.
- Upon discharge from the hospital you are encouraged to perform hand, wrist and elbow range of motion exercises 4-5 times per day. These exercises will help to decrease swelling.
- You may use the hand for gentle activity but should avoid lifting anything heavier than a water bottle after surgery.
- You may find it easiest to wear a shirt with buttons or zipper in the front. Many patients find sleeping in a recliner to be more comfortable than sleeping in bed after surgery.
- You should also gently perform shoulder pendulums with your waist bent and your arm dangling at your side while making small circles with your hand. You should perform these 2-4 times per day starting the day after surgery. You should not attempt to elevate the surgical arm under its own muscle power. Your physical therapist will progress your activity appropriately.



Follow-up

- Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you at Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine for approximately 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

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Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

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