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Thumb ulnar collateral ligament Repair POST-SURGICAL FAQ'S

When do I see Dr. Berschback after surgery?

You will return to see Dr. Berschback for your post-op visit about 10-14 days after surgery.

When can I use my hand?

When you leave the operating room, you will be placed in a dressing with a splint or a brace (if you had one prior to surgery). You should still be able to move your fingers, although your wrist will be immobilized. You can bend at the elbow and move your fingers while in the brace or splint, however, you should keep your post-surgical dressing in place until you see Dr. Berschback at your follow up visit. Try not to get your dressing or brace wet.

Why is my hand numb?

The anesthetic that is used during the procedure often leaves some or all of the fingers in your hand numb for many hours. This may last well into the night of your surgery or into the next day. The numbness from the anesthetic usually wears off by the following morning, but it may last a little longer. This varies greatly from patient to patient, and may also be affected by your age. When you feel the first signs of your anesthetic wearing off, you may want to start taking your pain medication to make you feel more comfortable.

How do I care for my dressings?

You will have a soft dressing over your incision and then a hard splint or a brace protecting your wrist after surgery. This should not get wet. This protective splint/brace will be removed at your first post-operative visit with Dr. Berschback.

When may I shower or bathe?

You may begin to shower or bathe as soon as you like, however, if you are still in your protective splint or brace after surgery, please do not get this wet. You may place a bag over your dressing or get in the bathtub instead of shower to help prevent your splint/brace from getting wet. After we have removed your hard splint/brace and your original dressings over your incision at your first post-operative visit, you may bathe normally and get your incision wet in the shower. Do not submerge the incision underwater for an extended period of time, such as in a pool or hot tub. Dry your incision well after it is cleaned.

When do the stitches come out?

If you have stitches in your skin that need to be removed, we will generally remove those approximately 10-14 days after your surgery, in the office.

What if my pain medication causes itching or nausea?

It is not uncommon for pain medications to cause these two side effects. If you experience itching you may take Claritin or Benadryl to help with this. Remember to take your pain medication with food. Anti-inflammatory medications such as Aleve or Advil will likely cause less nausea, but they can upset your stomach. Do not drive while taking medications that may sedate you while driving!

What about swelling?

Swelling is quite common following these procedures. Do your best to keep the hand elevated above the level of your heart. Moving the fingers to open and close into a tight fist is also encouraged. Taking ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) will help with swelling (note: do NOT take acetaminophen/ Tylenol in addition to your narcotic pain medication because the narcotic pain medication also has Tylenol in it. You may take 1 or the other, but not both).

When may I drive? You may begin driving again when you feel comfortable behind the wheel AND you are no longer taking any of the narcotic pain medications. If you would feel comfortable driving next to yourself on the road, it is probably safe for you return to this activity.

When can I go back to work?

It depends on the type of work you do. Those with jobs that are more sedentary and do not require heavy loads on the hands are often able to start returning to their duties sooner rather than later, however fine motor skills such as typing and writing may be difficult to perform. Jobs that involve extensive heavy lifting and strain on the hands may take more time to be able to return to work functions more normally. This is something quite unique to every patient's situation and can be discussed more specifically with Dr. Berschback at your office visit.

Should I be moving my fingers?

Yes!! You should move your fingers as frequently as possible, as this is very important for your recovery.