

ELBOW SURGERY POST-OP INSTRUCTION SHEET

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1. Eat only light, non-greasy foods today. Gradually increase your diet as tolerated.
2. **Pain control is important!** You should not wait until your pain is unbearable before taking your pain medications. Your elbow will be injected with medications during the surgery in order to help with pain relief. These medications typically wear off 4-6 hours after surgery and will be associated with **increasing pain** at that time. **This is normal.**
3. All patients will receive a prescription for pain medication in the office at their pre-operative visit. Pain medicine should be taken only as directed in order to help control your pain. Occasionally pain medicines may cause nausea if taken on an empty stomach. You can help prevent nausea by making sure you eat when you take your pain medication and that you are able to sit or lay down should you begin to feel lightheaded. In the first few days after surgery, you can **expect** some of the **side effects** such as drowsiness, lightheadedness, and nausea resulting from the pain medication. **You need to be as comfortable as possible, but also understand that no amount of pain medication, ice, and rest will completely remove the pain after surgery.**
4. If you are not allergic to Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Naprosyn, etc.), you may supplement your pain medication with one of the above anti-inflammatories to further facilitate pain relief and to help reduce inflammation. Because the pain prescription you were given contains a small amount of Acetaminophen, you should **avoid Tylenol** or any medication containing Acetaminophen while you are on the pain prescription. Another side effect of pain medication that can be easily remedied is **constipation**; increase your fluid intake, drink fruit juices, take an over the counter stool softener if necessary.
5. **Side effects that should not be ignored:** Difficulty breathing, a severe rash, extreme drowsiness, or nausea. If your side effect is life threatening, contact 911, if it is not life threatening, contact our office for further instruction.
6. **Apply ice** directly over the elbow bandage for 15 minutes every 1-3 hours while you are awake until your follow up appointment **or** as long as there is pain and swelling. **Elevating** the operated extremity **above the level of your heart** will also help to reduce swelling.
7. **Activity:** (option circled below)
 - a. Gentle **range of motion as tolerated** for elbow, wrist, and fingers (may remove sling during exercises).
 - b. **No motion** of involved elbow until instructed by physician.

8. Leave the dressing in place: (option circled below)
 - a. For **2 days**. Then remove the dressing and apply band-aids or a light dressing over the incision(s). **Once the incision is dry you may leave it uncovered and open to air.** Keep the sutures clean, dry, and intact. **Do not apply Neosporin or any other ointments over the incision!**
 - b. Until your follow-up appointment. Do not remove the splint or dressing until instructed by your physician.
9. You may begin to shower at **2 days**. Apply clean band-aids after showering. **Do NOT take a bath, get into a pool or hot tub, or soak your elbow for 2 weeks after surgery!** (If unable to remove your dressing until your follow-up, cover and protect your bandage when showering to keep it clean and dry!)
10. **Swelling and stiffness** about the elbow and involved extremity **is expected** for the first several weeks following your surgery. Gentle range of motion exercises with your hand and fingers will help to reduce swelling and stiffness. **Avoid lifting anything with your operative extremity until your follow-up appointment.**
11. Please note your post op **appointment date & time**, this information will be given to you at your pre-operative visit. If you need to confirm or change the appointment time, please contact the office.
12. You may return to work on the _____ post operative day.
13. You should call my nurse, Sharon at **(336)765-1571** if you notice that your bandages are completely saturated with blood, if you have a temperature above 101 degrees, if you have pain that does not decrease with pain medication and ice, if your fingers become cold, numb or purple, or if you have any other concerns or questions. **Some blood on the bandages is okay, however, persistent bleeding is not normal. Many patients will have an elevated temperature for the first few days after surgery. However, a temperature above 101 degrees is not normal, especially if associated with chills or severe pain. The pain medication and ice should help to “control” your pain, however, it will NOT take away all of the pain.**
14. **DO NOT operate heavy machinery, drive an automobile or make important decisions while under the influence of anesthesia for 24 hours after surgery or while taking pain medications. You may resume driving when you feel you can do so safely.**

Comments: _____

 Doctor Signature _____ Date _____

Patient Signature _____ Date _____