

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS OPEN SHOULDER

MEDICATION

- Pain medication will be prescribed after surgery depending on your procedure and needs to be picked up at your pre-determined pharmacy. Take as instructed and as needed.
 - **Pain medication may cause constipation. Please take an over-the-counter stool softener (Docusate, Colace, Dulcolax etc.) to help prevent this problem.**
 - You may take 400 mg ibuprofen every 8 hours for breakthrough pain during the first week after surgery. Do not take additional Tylenol if you are taking narcotic pain meds which also contain Tylenol.
 - You should take these medicines with food as they may cause nausea.
 - You may not drive or operate heavy equipment while on narcotics.
 - Pain medication is refilled on an individual basis and only during office hours.
- If you have a nerve block, **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE BLOCK COMPLETELY WEARS OFF to take your first dose of pain medication.**
 - Most patients find it helpful to take their first pill 8-10 hours after surgery and scheduling one pill every four to six hours the first night and morning after surgery and then weaning off.
- Melatonin 5 mg, taken one hour prior to bedtime has been shown to be helpful to aid in sleep in some patients undergoing shoulder surgery.
- **Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.**
- Call the office (713-486-7550) or 911 if you are having an adverse reaction to the medicine.

WOUND CARE

- You may remove the large tape bandages two days after surgery unless instructed otherwise. Do not remove the smaller clear dressing and gauze covering the incision.
- The incisions may not get wet until after your first post-operative visit. Place a garbage bag or use plastic wrap over your shoulder to shower or take a sponge bath while your dressings are on.
- You may remove the sling to shower but let your arm dangle to the side.
 - To access your armpit, lean forward slightly to let your arm dangle away from your side.
- Most patients will be able to get their incisions wet after their first post-op visit.
- NO submersion of wounds (bath, hot tub, pool) is recommended for a minimum of 2-3 weeks after surgery.

ACTIVITY

- Do not attempt to use your own muscles to move your elbow away from your side until instructed.
- The involved arm should be taken out of the sling two or three times a day to bend and straighten your elbow. You may move the hand and wrist as tolerated.
- Formal Physical Therapy will begin a few weeks after surgery.

SLING

- The sling should be used (with abduction pillow if given) at all times including night, except when dressing, showering or exercising the arm unless otherwise instructed.
 - **Position the pillow AT THE SIDE so your arm and hand face forward as opposed to across your stomach.**
- If the inside of the sling irritates your skin, line it with a soft t-shirt or towel. You may also do this to prevent it from becoming dirty over time.

- You will be instructed on how long you will need to wear it and whether you need to use the pillow on your first visit.
- It is not recommended that you drive in your sling.
- **If you had surgery to repair/reconstruct your AC joint**, it is important during the first six weeks after surgery that you try and minimize the force of gravity pulling down on your arm. You will be able to begin some limited motion exercises while laying down in physical therapy typically after the first few weeks.
 - For these patients only, position the pillow underneath the sling so your forearm rests on the pillow (like a table) to minimize the effect of gravity.

SLEEP

- Nighttime will probably be the most uncomfortable time after surgery.
 - Sleeping in a reclined chair or propped up on a pile of pillows may aid in sleeping.
 - Body pillow wedges (amazon.com) are also simple to use to sleep semi-upright.
 - Placing a pillow behind your sling at the elbow to prevent it from sagging may also be of benefit.

COLD THERAPY

- Ice should be used to assist in pain and swelling. Do not apply directly to exposed skin. Try to ice 20-30 minutes every 3-4 hours if possible.
 - A simple bag of frozen peas may be used as an inexpensive ice pack. Buy several bags of peas, place in a gallon size zip-lock bag making them about an inch thick and removing as much air as possible. Return to freezer, lying flat when done.

EMERGENCIES

- If you have an emergency contact Dr. Flores's office at 713-486-7550.
- Contact the office if you notice any of the following:
 - Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting, reaction to medication, inability to urinate, fever greater than 101.5 (low grade fever 1-2 days after surgery is normal), severe pain not relieved by pain medication, redness or continued drainage around incisions (a small amount is normal).
- **If you are having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT

- Please make your first post-op visit 5-10 after surgery if not done so already.
- **If you have any questions, please call the office at 713-486-7550.**