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Post-Operative Instructions Following Surgery for Distal Biceps Repair

1. WHEN DO I COME IN FOR MY FIRST FOLLOW-UP VISIT?

If an appointment has not already been scheduled, please call the office the day following surgery to schedule an appointment for approximately one week after your surgery.

2. WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER SURGERY?

After surgery, it is normal to experience some discomfort. You should have received a pain medication prescription from the nursing staff at the surgery center. Please fill the prescription and use the medication regularly as directed for the first twenty-four hours and then as needed after the first day. For minor discomfort, Tylenol may be used **instead** of the prescription medication. If you are able, you may take NSAIDs (ie. Advil, Aleve, Motrin, Ibuprofen, etc.) **with** your prescribed medication.

A low-grade temperature (99-101 degrees F) is common. Please call the office if your temperature is consistently elevated over 101.5 degrees.

In order to reduce swelling and pain, try to keep the operative elbow elevated for the first two days. Your elbow should be elevated above your heart as much as possible. When in a sling, your elbow is actually below your heart. So when able, please remove your arm from the sling and prop it up (ie. with pillows) so that it rests above your heart.

3. WHAT EFFECTS MIGHT I NOTICE FROM THE ANESTHESIA?

General anesthesia may cause some fatigue and lethargy that may exist for a day or two. Occasionally, nausea may occur. Eating light foods will help. Resume your regular diet as the nausea resolves.

4. HOW LONG SHOULD I WEAR THE SPLINT AND BANDAGE ON MY ELBOW?

The splint and bandage should be kept dry and in place until your follow-up visit with us, approximately one week after surgery. At that point we will remove the splint, bandages and sutures. We will put small white strips over the incision site that will be able to get wet. They will fall off approximately 5-7 days later. Once they fall off, you will not require any further bandages.

When the splint is removed, we will place your elbow in a brace. We will go over the brace instructions at that time.

5. WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP REDUCE SWELLING AND DISCOMFORT?

Limiting your activities and resting with your elbow elevated above your heart are the best methods of reducing swelling and discomfort and will help speed up your recovery. Ice may also be used. This can be done by filling a plastic bag with ice cubes and placing over the front of your elbow directly on the dressing. Leave the ice in place for 15-30 minutes. This may be done every hour while awake.

Repeatedly closing and then opening your hand and fingers is helpful. This can reduce swelling in your arm and hand. We suggest doing this several times an hour while awake.

With regard to your activity level, use common sense as your guide. You should avoid lifting, pushing or pulling anything heavier than a pen or pencil with your operative arm. All painful activities are to be avoided.

6. WILL I HAVE AN EXERCISE PROGRAM TO FOLLOW?

You will be given a home exercise program at your first follow-up visit. Formal physical therapy will likely be started around 6 weeks after surgery.

7. WHAT ELSE CAN I EXPECT?

1. Bruising and swelling of the elbow, arm, and hand is common. This is caused by bleeding from the bone and soft tissues (cut during the procedure) into the tissue just deep to the skin.
2. Some patients develop numbness and/or stiffness in the hand and fingers following surgery. This most often is due to swelling and immobilization of your arm and often resolves shortly after the swelling subsides and therapy begins. If numbness or weakness in your hand persists, or if you have any concerns, please call the office.