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Post-Operative Instructions Following Surgery for Epicondylitis

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 prescription from the nursing staff at the hospital. 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.

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 the sling, your elbow is 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 SHOULD I DO WITH THE SPLINT AND SLING WHEN I REMOVE THE DRESSING?

After removing your sling and splint and discarding the dressing, you should bend and straighten your elbow approximately 15 times and then replace the sling. The splint is no longer necessary and may be discarded. You should try to achieve full range of motion. Perform these exercises at least three times a day. You may also wish to remove the sling several times a day to move your neck, wrist, and hand around, as they may get stiff while in the sling. This is permitted and is a good idea.

4. HOW LONG SHOULD I KEEP MY ELBOW DRY AND WEAR THE BANDAGE?

The splint and bandage should be kept dry and in place for 48 hours.

Forty-eight hours after surgery, please remove the splint and bandages. Leave the sutures and the white strips that are on the incision in place. Cover the operative sites with a large Band-Aid or gauze.

It is best to keep the incision dry. If you would like to shower, you can cover the operative site with plastic wrap and tape. Following your shower, you may use a hairdryer to dry the operative site if it has gotten wet. It may be easier to take baths until the sutures are removed. However, do not immerse your elbow in water (i.e. swimming, baths, or hot tubs) while the stitches are in place.

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 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 surgical site with a towel between the skin and the ice bag. Leave the ice in place for 15-30 minutes. This may be done every hour while awake.

Regarding 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. 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.

7. WILL I HAVE AN EXERCISE PROGRAM TO FOLLOW?

You have been provided a prescription for physical therapy. Therapy is critical in obtaining full recovery. If you have not already scheduled physical therapy, please call a therapy location in the next several days to arrange to begin therapy as soon as possible. You may begin therapy before you follow-up with me.