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Post-Operative Instructions Following Shoulder 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 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.

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

3. HOW LONG SHOULD I KEEP MY SHOULDER DRY AND WEAR THE BANDAGE?

The bandage should be kept dry and in place for 48 hours. For the first 48 hours, it is best to take baths so that the dressing may remain dry.

Forty-eight hours after surgery, please remove and discard the bandages. If there are small white strips over your incisions, please leave them in place. Until your sutures are removed, showers are recommended. Please keep the incisions covered either with gauze and a loosely fitting ace bandage or Band-Aids. Immersing your shoulder in a bath or pool should be avoided.

4. WHAT EFFECTS MIGHT I NOTICE FROM THE ANESTHESIA?

If you had general anesthesia, some fatigue and lethargy may be noticeable for a day or two. Occasionally, nausea may occur. Eating light foods will help. Resume your regular diet as the nausea resolves. Call the office if your nausea persists beyond the night of surgery.

If you had scalene anesthesia, soreness in the area of injection is common. The soreness should resolve by three to four days following the surgery. If, by that time, it has not resolved or it is getting worse, please call our office or call the hospital and ask for the anesthesia office.

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

Limiting your activities and resting with your shoulder elevated above your heart (i.e. sitting upright) are the best methods of reducing swelling and discomfort and will speed up your recovery. You may have a cool therapy device. If this is the case, the company's representative should have provided you with instructions on its proper use. If not, please call their office for assistance. If you cannot reach them, please call our office. Ice may also be used. Fill a plastic bag with ice cubes and place it over the shoulder 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. Sleeping on your back with the head of your bed raised to ≥ 30 degrees or sleeping on the non-operative side will reduce discomfort at night. You may also want to take pain medication before going to sleep.

With regard to your activity level, use common sense as your guide. Advance in your daily activities as tolerated. Painful activities are to be avoided. Limit shoulder activities to those suggested by me or your therapist.

6. HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD I USE THE SLING?

Use the sling until further notice. Your therapist and I will guide you. Beginning on the first post-operative day, remove the sling three to four times a day and flex and extend (bend and straighten) your elbow 15-25 times with your arm at your side.

7. WILL I HAVE AN EXERCISE PROGRAM TO FOLLOW?

Remove your sling three times a day and perform pendulum exercises, beginning the day after surgery. These are performed by leaning over, bending your waist approximately 90 degrees and resting your non-operative arm on a table to support your body. Your operative arm should hang toward the ground. Allow your arm on the operative side to rotate in a clockwise fashion producing small circles with your hand. Perform this for approximately 10 circles and then repeat in a counterclockwise fashion. Let gravity do most of the work. This is a simple motion designed to reduce stiffness. It should not be performed too fast or with large arcs of motion.

You have been given a prescription for physical therapy. If you have not already scheduled therapy, please arrange for this to begin **as soon as possible**. If you need assistance locating a therapist, please call the office.

8. WHAT ELSE CAN I EXPECT?

1. Bruising and swelling of the shoulder, 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 in your hand persists, please call the office.
3. It is common to develop a stiff neck following surgery. This may be caused by the sling as well as from the immobilization of your arm. By frequently moving your neck in slow circles as well as side to side and front to back, this stiffness may be minimized.