



Discharge Instructions for Elbow Fracture Surgery

Wound Care:

- Keep dressing/splint on until your first postoperative appointment. The splint is not removable it serves the purpose of protecting the fracture that has just been repaired.
- It is very important to keep the splint dry. If the splint becomes wet, it will soften and break apart. If this happens, call the office immediately.
- While showering place a large plastic bag over the arm and securely tape just below the shoulder. Keeping the hand elevated during the shower will prevent the bandages from getting wet.
- Do not submerge in water until sutures are removed at 2 weeks.
- Sutures will be removed during your first post-operative appointment (10-14 days after surgery)

Activity:

- Elevate the operative hand above your heart, fingers pointing up, continuously for 72 hours to help decrease post-operative swelling.
- To prevent swelling and stiffness make a fist and fully straighten the fingers out 10 times an hour while awake. While using a sling, remember to move your elbow and shoulder daily to prevent stiffness.
- Avoid pushing / pulling / or lifting anything heavier than a pencil.
- Use the extremity with caution in the postoperative period. Typing or writing immediately after surgery is usually limited due to swelling and stiffness of the hand; it may be 3-4 weeks until you are able to do this without difficulty. Overuse during this period will lead to increased discomfort and should be avoided.
- **NO DRIVING.** It may be up to 6-8 weeks after surgery before it is safe for you to drive.

Medications:

- Please continue all medications that you were taking prior to your surgery in additions to the medications prescribed for post-operative pain. If you have questions regarding those medications that you were on prior to surgery, please contact your primary care physician.
- Use narcotic medications (Norco, Percocet) sparingly and slowly try to decrease the amount and frequency over the next two weeks.
- If you feel the narcotic pain medication is too strong, you may use acetaminophen instead.
- Avoid taking ibuprofen since it has been shown to delay bone healing.

Ice:

- Use ice pack for first week.
- Apply ice 20 minutes every 4-6 hours.
- Ice or cold pack should never be applied directly on the skin as this may cause skin injury.
- A cloth or towel should always be used as a barrier to protect the skin.



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Diet:

- Resume a normal diet.
- If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Often the pain medication causes constipation, if this occurs you may try an over the counter laxative / stool softener (such as Colace or Senokot) or take a fiber supplement every day.

Follow-up Appointments:

- Your first post-operative appointment will be in 10-14 days.
- If you do not have these appointments set up, please call the appointment line

When to call for help:

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

You pass out (lose consciousness).

You have severe trouble breathing.

You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

You have severe nausea or vomiting.

Call the office if:

You have pain that does not go away after you take pain pills.

You have a fever over 100.4°F.

You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.

Your incision keeps bleeding 3 days after your surgery.

You have signs of infection, such as redness around incision or pus draining from your incision.