



## **POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: UPPER EXTREMITY PROCEDURES**

### **Diet**

- You may resume your regular diet without restrictions. However, start slow with clear liquids and gradually work your way back to your normal diet. This will help prevent nausea and vomiting.

### **Wound Care**

- You may have a splint applied to your surgical extremity that is secured with an ACE wrap. If so: please leave your splint on. This will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- When caring for a splint after surgery it is permissible to shower or sponge bathe 4 days after surgery. However, you **MUST** keep your arm clean and dry. This usually requires you to keep your arm outside of the shower and use saran wrap, waterproof bandages, or a large plastic bag to protect your post-op splint application. We will give you further instructions on when you can shower normally at your first post-op visit.
- You can remove the outer layer of dressings if there is no splint present (ace wrap, webril dressing, and padding) 4 days after surgery. After that, you are permitted to shower without restrictions. Again, if a splint is present do not remove the ace wrap or padding.
- Do not submerge your surgical arm or soak in a hot tub, swimming pool, or bath until 4 weeks post-operatively when your incisions have completely healed.
- Any sutures or skin closure will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- It is common after surgery to experience swelling, discomfort, or a sensation of numbness/tingling surrounding the hand/wrist. You can loosen the ace wrap as needed (while still maintaining ample compression) to reduce the swelling and accompanying symptoms; please reapply compression when the symptoms subside.

### **DVT Prevention**

- Please remain ambulatory and perform ankle pumps to help prevent blood clots.
- Sometimes we have to prescribe a blood thinner to help prevent blood clots (especially if you have a personal or family history of DVT/pulmonary embolism). If discussed prior to



surgery, please defer to our recommendations given pre-op. Unless recommended you do not need to take any aspirin or other DVT prophylaxis.

- If you are traveling after surgery, please let us know: we advise that you wait at least one week between surgery date and travel. Please see below for some general tips for preventing blood clots when traveling:

- Get up on the plane to walk every hour or if driving stop every 1-2 hours to get up and walk
- Stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Take 325mg Aspirin the day before, day of, and day after the travel (if advised)
- Perform ankle pump exercises during travel
- If you experience pain or swelling in your calf, please call our office immediately or go to a local emergency department for evaluation.

### **Post-Operative Activity and Weight Bearing**

- If you were given a splint after surgery, please keep it clean and dry and do not put any weight on your arm. You will be non-weightbearing until further notice.

- Keep the surgical extremity elevated with the hand higher than the elbow and pointed towards the ceiling to avoid swelling into the hand and fingers.

### **Cold Therapy**

- Ice should be used to help reduce pain and swelling. Use it as often as possible the first 3 days after surgery, alternating 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. After the third day, use it at least 3-5 times a day for 20 minutes until pain and swelling have resolved.

- Please keep in mind that it may be difficult to ice through your splint and ace wrap; you can apply ice to any area adjacent to the surgical joint to attempt to find relief using this modality.

### **Pain Medication**

- Take your pain medication as prescribed. This usually means 1 tablet every 4 hours for mild pain or 2 tablets every 4-6 hours for more severe pain. Do not take any additional Tylenol when taking these narcotic medications.

- You can also use over-the-counter NSAIDS once you are eating well. These medications help to reduce pain, swelling, and stiffness. We recommend that you transition to either Aleve or Ibuprofen (following dosage on the bottle) when your pain is manageable.

- The narcotic pain medication can cause constipation if you take it regularly. Some treatments include prescribed stool softeners, fiber bars, Metamucil, or prune juice.



- You are not permitted to drive while taking your narcotic pain medication.
- The pain medication can cause nausea so always take it with food.

**\*\*Please call a minimum of 24 hours prior to needing additional medications in order to provide you with the handwritten copy. All requests for prescriptions prior to the weekend must be received by Thursday at noon. Failure to plan accordingly and contact our office prior to needing a refill may prevent you from obtaining your medication.**

**Notify the Office if you Experience the Following**

- Flu-like symptoms, nausea/vomiting, temperature of 101.5 degrees or higher, severe chills; foul odor, redness, or increased tenderness or drainage from the incision. These are signs of a possible infection. You may need to report to an Emergency Room.
- A hot tender area or unusually large amounts of swelling in either calf or other area of the leg; chest pain, shortness of breath or coughing up blood are signs of a possible blood clot and you may need to report to an Emergency Room or call 911.
- **If you have any other URGENT problem, call the office 714-850-7300. You will be transferred to the answering service and the on call physician if it is outside of normal business hours. If you are concerned that you have a life-threatening condition or emergency, DO NOT CALL THE OFFICE; call 911 immediately.**

**Follow-up**

- You should already have your post-operative appointment scheduled; this should be scheduled for 10-14 days after your surgery date. Please call the office with any questions or to confirm your appointment at 714-850-7300