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ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY & SPORTS MEDICINE

Shoulder Arthroscopy "With Repair" Post-Op Instructions

For arthroscopic shoulder surgery that included a repair. (Decompression without repair has its own instructions.)

Food

Start slowly. It's natural to want to eat a lot after surgery, but start with small amounts of your normal food, and eat more as your nausea improves.

Incision

Keep your incision dry for 48 hours. After that, you may remove the dressing and shower, but leave the Steri-Strips or glue in place. You may let water run over the incision, but do not soak it in a bath, swimming pool, lake, or hot tub for three weeks. Keep a Band-Aid on the incision until it is no longer draining (about 7 days).

Activity & Sling

Be careful with your shoulder. You may gradually use it and wean out of your sling as your pain allows — but no lifting anything heavier than a pencil. Most patients take several weeks to wean out of the sling.

Swelling

Ice machines or reusable ice pads (search “shoulder ice machine” on Amazon) can be great for reducing pain and swelling. I like them, but frozen peas work just as well. Be careful not to freeze your skin: use 20 minutes on and 10 minutes off, unless your machine has temperature settings that prevent freezing.

Physical Therapy

Please arrange physical therapy for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. You will continue therapy for several months after surgery.

Medications

For pain, alternate over-the-counter ibuprofen and Tylenol — for example, take regular Tylenol, then ibuprofen 2 hours later. Do not take more than the daily dose shown on the label for either one. While taking ibuprofen, I also recommend over-the-counter Pepcid or another antacid to help prevent a stomach ulcer. For prescription pain medicine (narcotics), see below. If you are also taking daily aspirin to prevent blood clots, take your ibuprofen at least 30 minutes after the aspirin — or at least 8 hours before it.

Narcotics

You may need narcotics for a few days, but the sooner you stop using them, the better you will feel. Refills are rarely needed. We do not refill these medications after hours or on weekends, and a refill takes about 72 hours, so please plan ahead. If you take narcotic medications regularly, you will need to make arrangements with your regular prescribing provider.

Post Operative Visits

Call to schedule an appointment about 2 weeks after surgery.

Precautionary Measures

1. To prevent infection, you were given IV antibiotics before your surgery.
2. To prevent blood clots, stay active. Walk around your living room once every hour while you are awake, and take aspirin 81 mg twice daily for 2 weeks.
3. If you are taking narcotic pain medication (such as Percocet or Vicodin), you may need a laxative to prevent constipation. We recommend an over-the-counter stimulant laxative such as Senna. Narcotics slow the bowel down, and Senna works by stimulating it. Fiber-only products (like Metamucil) usually aren't enough on their own, since they add bulk but don't stimulate the bowel.

When to Call / Emergencies

Call the office or go to the ER if you experience any of the following:

- Incision opens
- Increased redness at incision site
- Pain uncontrolled by pain medicine
- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Fever > 101.5°F or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- New calf pain or ankle swelling
- Painful swelling

If this is a life-threatening emergency, call 911.