



## POST-OPERATIVE UPPER EXTREMITY INSTRUCTIONS

What was found:

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What was done:

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### 1. Wound Care

- Dressing Care:
  - \* You may remove the dressing in 4 days and apply band aids to cover stitches. Please leave steri strips on (white tapes across wound). It is OK if they fall off.
  - \* You may shower in 4 days with the incision covered. Keep it clean and dry.
  - \* Do not get into a tub or pool until the sutures are removed.
- You have dissolvable sutures
- Sutures will be removed in our office in 10 to 14 days
- Cast Care
  - \* Keep your cast dry at ALL times
  - \* No dressing changes necessary
  - \* You may shower in 2 days, but MUST keep the cast DRY, cover and wrap the cast with plastic, there are also commercially available products for this

### 2. Icing

- A Cryocuff has been applied. It is recommended that you use it fairly consistently for the first 24 to 48 hours to help diminish the swelling. After the 48-hour period, if it is comfortable for you, you may use the Cryocuff or apply ice packs 3-4 times per day for 30 minutes until swelling is resolved.
- Please apply ice packs to the knee 3-4 times per day for 30 minutes until swelling is resolved. Be careful of applying ice directly to the skin as this may result in frostbite.
- Although clearly not as effective, you can still apply ice packs around a cast.

### 3. Sling / Immobilizer

- You may be given a sling. You should wear the sling on for comfort.
- You may be given a sling. You should wear the sling at all times except for hygiene.
- You have been given an immobilizer. You should wear it at all times except for hygiene.

### 4. Physical Therapy

You may begin gentle elbow / wrist / hand range of motion exercises as tolerated. Let pain and swelling be your guide as to how much you do. Formal physical therapy will be organized for you at your first post-op visit.

- You may begin gentle pendulum exercises
- You may call to schedule a physical therapy appointment to begin after our first post-operative visit
  - Formal physical therapy will be arranged for you at your first post-operative visit if necessary

No weight lifting or water therapy during first two weeks. If an exercise is very painful, stop doing it or do it within the limits of motion that is not painful. Major therapy gains are not achieved during the first two weeks. This is mainly a recuperative period.

### 5. Pain Control

- If you had a nerve block, your arm may be numb for 12-18 hours. Although you may not be having much pain, start taking your pain medication 6 hours after surgery.

\* You have been prescribed \_\_\_\_\_ (which is a narcotic pain medication) for your post-op pain control.

\* Use the medicine as prescribed and do not drive, drink alcohol, or perform duties that require concentration (i.e. school or work) while on the narcotic medication.

\* After the first three days, you may find it beneficial to take an over the counter anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (or Motrin or Advil or naprosyn or Aleve) for additional pain control if you do not have a contraindications to taking this medication (i.e. allergy to the medication, stomach ulcers or kidney problems). If you had a Lateral release, do

not take these anti-inflammatory medications for the first week as they may increase the risk of bleeding.

## 6. Other Medications

- Valium is a muscle relaxant that is used for muscle spasms that are quite common after surgery. Take one tablet up to 3 times a day. Use as prescribed unless contradicted. Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcohol while on valium. This can be taken in conjunction with the pain medication. Half a pill can be used if the effects are too strong.
- Zofran is an anti-nausea medication. Use as directed for nausea or vomiting.
- Colace is an anti-constipation medication. Use as directed for constipation.
- Indocin is a strong anti-inflammatory used for the prevention of heterotopic ossification (excess bone re-formation). Take 1 pill a day with food for 3 weeks. DO NOT mix this with other anti-inflammatory medications such as Aleve, Motrin or Advil during these first three weeks. Once you are finished with the Indocin, you can switch to these medications (see section 5 above)

## 7. Driving

You may not drive at least until your post-op visit when you and Dr. Schleyer can make a decision.

## 8. Sports

Do not resume sports until you have discussed this on your first post-op visit.

## 9. Additional Information:

- Deep Venous Thrombosis (DVT):

Blood clots (DVT) are unusual but can occur after lower extremity surgery. Please call the office for calf pain, leg swelling, or difficulty breathing. If you have a clotting disorder or there is a family history of blood clots, please inform Dr. Schleyer and the office.

- No DVT prophylaxis necessary.
- Surgical Support Stockings: Compressive stockings (thigh high for hips, knee high for knees) should be used for two weeks after surgery on the operative leg. These can be purchased over-the-counter at a pharmacy or medical supply store.



- Aspirin: Take one enteric-coated aspirin daily for \_\_\_\_ weeks after surgery. Stop for any gastrointestinal or wound bleeding.
- Lovenox: A prescription for an injectable low molecular-weight heparin for 2 weeks after surgery will be given to you. This should be starting the evening of the first day after surgery

Please resume birth control 1 cycle AFTER surgery.

### **WHAT IS TO BE EXPECTED:**

After surgery, there is a variable amount of pain and swelling, often depending on how much surgery was done. This usually diminishes after several days. It is helpful to keep the extremity elevated above your heart and to apply ice regularly.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY:**

Signs and symptoms to report:

- \*persistent fever
- \*sudden increase in pain or swelling
- \*wound redness, drainage, or increased skin temperature around the incision
- \*increasing numbness
- \*deep calf pain and/or swelling
- \*shortness of breath

### **Who to call:**

- \* If you have any problems please call Dr. Schleyer's office at (978) 927-3040
- \* You should have a post-op appointment scheduled in 10-14 days. If you do not, call (978) 927-3040 to set this up.