

ELBOW SURGERY

Post-Operative Instructions

****Please note that the instructions provided below are general guidelines to be followed; however, any written or verbal instructions provided by Dr. Okoroha or his team supersede the instructions below and should be followed.**

WOUND CARE

- Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the hand occurs
- It is normal for the elbow to bleed and swell following surgery. If blood soaks through the bandage, do not become alarmed, reinforce with additional dressing
- **Elbow will be immobilized in a splint/sling following surgery do not remove until post op appointment 7-14 days following surgery.**

SHOWERING

- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a plastic covering over the surgical site beginning the day after surgery.
- You may begin showering and getting your wound site wet after your first post-op appointment.
- NO immersion in a bath until given approval by our office.

ICE THERAPY

- Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery.
- Use ice machine continuously to ice for 45 minutes every 2 hours daily until your first post-operative visit.
- Use the ice machine (when prescribed) as directed for the first 2-3 days following surgery. Ice at your discretion thereafter.
- When using "real" ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage / frostbite of skin. In either case, check the skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering or other signs of frostbite.
- Remember to keep the extremity elevated while icing when able.
- For technical questions regarding the ice machine, please contact the vendor directly using the telephone number on the device.



MEDICATIONS

- Local anesthetics are injected into the wound and joint at the time of surgery. This will wear off within 8-12 hours and it is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery when swelling peaks.
- It is recommended to begin the prescription pain medication provided to you upon arriving home, and continue every 4 hours for the first 1-2 days after surgery.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease the side effects take the medication with food. If constipation occurs, consider taking an over the counter stool softener such as Dulcolax or Colace or a laxative.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medications changed.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication.
- If you are having pain that is not being controlled by the pain medication prescribed, you may take an over the counter anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen or naproxen in between doses of pain medication. This will help to decrease pain and decrease the amount of narcotic medication required. Please take as directed on the bottle.
- For **3 weeks following surgery take a blood thinner** as prescribed to lower the risk of developing a blood clot after surgery. Please contact the office should severe distal arm pain occur or significant swelling of the distal arm and/or hand occur.

ACTIVITY

- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (ie: reclining chair) and a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort.
- Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling. Unless otherwise instructed the arm should remain in the sling at all times.
- Avoid long periods of sitting or long distance traveling for 2 weeks.
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by a physician
- May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

SLING/IMMOBILIZER (if prescribed)

- You will be placed in a post mold splint where you cannot straighten your elbow for 1-2 weeks following surgery
- You are to wear sling at all times while the splint is in place

SLEEP

- Sleeping can be uncomfortable for the first 1-2 weeks after elbow surgery.
- It can be helpful to sleep in a recliner-chair or in a semi-upright position.



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EXERCISE

- Begin finger flexion and extension on the first post-operative day to help decrease swelling.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) typically begins after your first post op appointment.
- A prescription and protocol will be provided at your first post-op visit.

EMERGENCIES**

- Contact Dr. Okoroha's PA at OkorohaPA@gmail.com if any of the following are present:
 - Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
 - Unrelenting pain
 - Fever (over 101° - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
 - Redness around incisions
 - Color change in distal arm and/or hand
 - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Excessive nausea/vomiting
 - Calf pain
- If you have an emergency **after office hours** or on the weekend, contact the service line at **507-284-4300** and you will be connected with someone who can help.
- **If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.**

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact the our scheduler at 612-502-5386 to schedule.
- Typically the first post-operative appointment following surgery is 10-14 days following surgery
- The first post operative appointment may be with one of the Physician Assistants. They will assess the wound, and answer any questions you may have regarding the procedure
- If you have any further questions please contact Dr. Okoroha's physician assistant at OkorohaPA@gmail.com for the fastest response. If e-mail is not an option please call the practice at 612-313-0531.



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