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Shoulder, Elbow & Knee Specialist

## Elbow Surgery- Post-Operative Instructions

### Activity:

- Take it easy the first 24-48 hours, particularly if it's hot out. Spend most of the first 24 hours resting in bed
- After the first 24 hours, slowly increase your activity level based on your symptoms.
- Do not drive until you have stopped taking opioid medication.

### Exercises:

- Begin exercises the first day after surgery
  - Shoulder shrugs – Shrug your shoulders up and down.
  - Pendulums – Bend forward allowing your arm to hang down in front of you. Support the splint with other hand. Gently swing your arm side-to-side and front to back.
  - Hand motion – Make fist/extend fingers
- Your ability to do these exercises will improve as you continue to do them. Do these exercises for 2-5 minutes five times a day.

### **Pain Management**

#### Regional Anesthesia:

##### INTERSCALENE BLOCK

- Your shoulder has been injected with numbing medicine which usually lasts 12 to 18 hours, maybe 24 hours. Your arm may be temporarily “paralyzed”, so you need to protect it from injury. Avoid pressure to the splint/dressing by padding these areas with pillows. Reposition your arm every hour.
- You may feel tingling and some discomfort when the block is wearing off. This is when you should take your pain pill. Do not wait until all the numbness has worn off.
- You may notice your face and eye are droopy on the side of the block. Also, your voice may be hoarse, and you may find it a little difficult to take a deep breath. If you have these symptoms, use care in swallowing until the block wears off.

##### LOCAL BLOCK

- Your surgical area has been injected with numbing medication which may last 2 to 12 hours. While the area is numb, you need to protect it from injury. You may feel tingling and the beginning of discomfort when the block is wearing off.

#### Cold Therapy:

- Begin as soon as you get home from surgery
- Use cold therapy, whether ice packs, gel wraps, or Polar Care, for up to 20 minutes out of every hour until your first post-op visit.
- If you do not purchase an ice machine, please use ice packs on the surgical site. Ice packs can be applied for up to 20 minutes out of every hour until your first post-op visit.
- While icing, be sure to have a layer between the cold/ice pack and your splint. DO NOT get the splint wet.

Medications: \*\*\*Be sure to pick up your prescriptions before arriving home.

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): 875-1,000 milligrams (or 1 gram) can be taken every 8 hours for the first 10-14 days. DO NOT take more than 4 g (or 4,000 milligrams) in a 24-hour period.
- NSAIDS (Ibuprofen/Advil): 600-800 milligrams can be taken with meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). DO NOT take if you have a history of stomach issues.
- Narcotics/Opioids (Oxycodone): Take as directed. Wean off as soon as possible to avoid side effects. We will NOT refill narcotic pain medications after hours.

Other Medications

- Stool Softener: While taking opioids, take a stool softener as well to prevent constipation (Colace - over the counter)
- Anti-nausea (Zofran): If you have nausea at home, use this medication as directed.

Diet:

- Eat a bland diet for the first day after surgery
- Start with small servings at first

Incision Care:

- Keep dressing or splint clean, dry, and intact until your first follow-up appointment

Showering:

- All incisions and dressings must stay dry until sutures are removed. While the dressing is still on, please seal the area to keep dry during a shower. Saran wrap or "Press n' Seal" can be applied over the incision area to take a shower.
- If there is any concern water got under the dressing, remove it immediately and cover with sterile gauze and tape.
- No baths or submersion of the wound until 48 hours after all sutures have been removed. If you have questions, please call the office.

Physical Therapy:

- Physical therapy is an essential component to your recovery from surgery. Unless other instructions are given, you will begin PT after your first post op appointment.

Questions or Concerns:

- Contact Dr. Krueger's office by phone (314-375-3796) or by email (teamkrueger@orthomo.com) if any of the following are present:
  - Painful swelling or numbness
  - Unrelenting pain
  - Fever (note – it is normal to have a low-grade fever (101° and under) for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
  - Redness around incisions
  - Color change in wrist or hand
  - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Excessive nausea/vomiting