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Post-op Instructions for Shoulder Decompression, A-C Joint Resection, or Debridement

These instructions complement the information given by the nursing staff and Physical Therapists. They cover many common questions.

Wound Care

- Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. Reinforce the dressing as needed with additional gauze and tape. You may change the dressing daily starting 3 days after surgery with dry gauze and securing with tape. You may remove the steri strips as they become loose. Continue daily dressing changes until the incisions have no drainage for 48 hours.
- When showering: You may get incisions wet three days after surgery. The shower should be brief, and the wounds patted dry with a clean towel. No baths or soaking the incision until 2 weeks after surgery and scabs are absent. You may remove the sling and pillow to shower and replace it with a rolled towel or empty milk jug for comfort while showering. You may also bend at the waist and gently dangle your arm to wash and dry underneath it.
- If you notice purulent drainage (thick white or greenish in color) from the wound, increasing redness, or you have a temperature of 101 or higher, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

Pain

- Ice your shoulder as frequently as possible. We recommend 4-5 times per day for 20 minutes per time. You may use either the ice machine given to you at the hospital or simply place ice in a zip lock bag, wrap it in a towel, and place it on the shoulder. Do not apply ice directly to the skin as it may damage the skin if left on for long periods of time.
- Swelling is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the hand above the heart level for the first 2-5 days after surgery. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon.
- For baseline pain control, we recommend adults* take Tylenol (Acetaminophen) 1000mg** three times a day. If your prescription pain medication also contains Tylenol, you should reduce this. You should not take more than 3000mg of Tylenol in a 24-hour period. You may also supplement your pain medication by taking an anti-inflammatory medication such as Ibuprofen (Advil) or Naprosyn (Aleve) between Tylenol doses (unless you have been told you cannot take these medications, are taking a blood thinner or have a history of or develop stomach ulceration).
- If that is not adequate, prescription strength pain medication may be prescribed for after you leave the hospital. Wean off this medication as your pain allows, continuing the Tylenol and anti-inflammatory as tolerated. Prescription strength medications can cause constipation and you may want to use a stool softener. If a refill is needed, please call the office during regular business hours, Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Refills will not be made after hours or on weekends, so please plan ahead.

****Tylenol 325mg: 3 tabs every 8 hours OR Tylenol 500mg: 2 tabs every 8 hours**

Shared (X:) → Postop Instructions → TLB post op → TLB- Shoulder Decompression, AC Joint Resection, or Debridement

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Driving

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol is allowed). Also, you must feel strong and alert. You may remove your arm from the sling to hold the bottom of the steering wheel. Most people start driving approximately two-four weeks after surgery.

Exercises

- Leave your arm in the sling during the first several days after surgery for comfort. You may take it out of the sling for exercises and showering. You may adjust the sling as needed to make it more comfortable. The pillow underneath the sling can be removed if uncomfortable. Your therapist will help you advance your activity.
- Many patients find sleeping in a recliner to be more comfortable than sleeping in bed after surgery.
- Upon discharge from the hospital, you are encouraged to perform hand, wrist, and elbow range of motion exercises 4-5 times per day. These exercises will help to reduce swelling.
- You should also gently perform shoulder pendulums with your waist bent and your arm dangling at your side while making small circles with your hand. You should perform these 2-4 times per day starting the day after surgery. Your physical therapist will progress your activity appropriately.

Follow-up

- Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you at Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine for approximately 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- Please call the office with any questions or concerns.

Troy Berg, MD

Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

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