

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS ELBOW SURGERY

MEDICATION

- One of two pain medications, Norco (hydrocodone), or Percocet (oxycodone) will be prescribed to you. Take as instructed and as needed.
 - Pain medication may cause constipation. You may take an over the counter stool softener (Colace, Senekot, etc) to help prevent this problem.
 - You should take these medicines with food or they may nauseate you.
 - You may not drive or operate heavy equipment while on narcotics.
 - Pain medication is refilled on an individual basis and only during office hours.
- If you have a nerve block, begin taking the pills as you feel your sensation returning to prevent a sudden onset of extreme pain (typically 10-12 hours after your surgery). **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE BLOCK COMPLETELY WEARS OFF.**
 - Most patients find it helpful to take two pills 10-12 hours after surgery and another two every four hours the first night after surgery, decreasing the amount as you feel the pain improving.
 - The first 48 hours are typically the worst for pain and gradually improves.
- **Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.**
- Call immediately to the office (314-336-2555) if you are having an adverse reaction to the medicine.

WOUND CARE

- If you are in a splint, do not remove or unwrap bandages.
- If you are in a soft bandage, you may remove them on the second day after surgery unless otherwise instructed (surgery Tuesday, remove Thursday; Thursday surgery, remove Saturday). Do not remove steri-strips (tape pieces).
- The incisions may not get wet until after your first post-operative visit. Place a large garbage bag over your elbow to shower or take a sponge bath while your dressings are on.
- After your dressings have been removed, you may cover with plastic wrap, waterproof bandages or continue to use the bag to shower.
- NO submersion of wounds (bath, hot tub, pool) is allowed until a minimum of 3 weeks after surgery.

ACTIVITY

- Depending on your surgery, certain restrictions may apply which will be addressed in therapy and at your first visit.

SLING

- Remain in sling at all times, except when dressing, showering or exercising the arm unless otherwise instructed.

SLEEP

- Nighttime will probably be the most uncomfortable time.
- Sleep in your sling or brace until instructed otherwise.

COLD THERAPY

- Ice should be used for comfort and swelling. Use it at least 20 minutes at a time. Many patients use it an hour on then an hour off while awake for the first day or two.
- **Never apply directly to exposed skin. Place a dish-towel or t-shirt between your skin and the ice.**
- After the two days, use 20-30 minutes every 3-4 hours if possible.
- A simple bag of frozen peas may be used as an inexpensive ice pack. Buy several bags of peas, place in a gallon size zip-lock bag making them about an inch thick and removing as much air as possible. Return to freezer, lying flat when done.

EMERGENCIES

- If you have an emergency contact Dr. Grimshaw's office.
- Contact the office if you notice any of the following:
 - Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting, reaction to medication, inability to urinate, fever greater than 101.5 (low grade fevers 1-2 days after surgery is normal), severe pain not relieved by pain medication, redness or continued drainage around incisions (a small amount is normal), calf pain or severe swelling.
- **If you are having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT

- Please make your first post-op visit 5-7 after surgery if not done so already.
- **If you have any questions, please call 314-336-2555.**