

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AC RECONSTRUCTION

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.
- A sleeping pill may also be given, take as needed.
- **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

- You may remove surgical dressings on the second day after surgery unless otherwise. Do not remove steri-strips (tape pieces). If steri-strips fall off, cover incisions with band-aids.
- The incisions may not get wet until after your first post-operative visit. Place a large garbage bag over your shoulder to shower or take a sponge bath while your dressings are on.
- You may remove the sling to shower but keep your arm supported at the side to minimize the pull of gravity
- After your dressings have been removed, you may continue to use the bag to shower, cover with plastic wrap or use waterproof bandages.
 - To access your armpit, lean forward slightly to let your arm dangle away from your side.
- Most patients will be able to get their incisions wet after their first post-op visit.

- NO submersion of wounds (bath, hot tub, pool) is allowed until a minimum of 2-3 weeks after surgery.

ACTIVITY

- **It is important during the first six weeks after surgery that you try and minimize the force of gravity pulling on your arm. You will be able to begin some limited motion exercises while laying down in physical therapy typically after the first few weeks.**
- Do not attempt to use your own muscles to move your elbow away from your side until instructed.
- The involved arm may be taken out of the sling three times a day to bend and straighten your elbow unless otherwise instructed.
- You may move the hand and wrist as tolerated (minimum 3 times a day).

SLING

- Remain in sling (with abduction pillow below) at all times, except when dressing, showering or exercising the arm unless otherwise instructed.
- It is not recommended that you drive in your sling.

SLEEP

- Nighttime will probably be the most uncomfortable time. You may use the sleeping aid as prescribed to assist you in resting well.
- Sleeping in a reclined chair or propped up on a pile of pillows may aid in sleeping. Placing a pillow behind the elbow to prevent it from sagging may also be of benefit.
- Sleep in your sling 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.

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 fever 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).
- **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.**