



Post Operative Instructions: Elbow Fracture ORIF

ACTIVITY

- You **may not bear weight** on the operated arm (lean on the arm, push off the surface, carry objects greater than 5 pounds) until permitted by Dr. Crall.

SPLINT & SLING

- Keep the splint on at all times. We will remove this during your visit to the clinic.
- You may remove the sling as much as you would like; it is just for your comfort.

DRESSING & INCISIONS

- A small amount of red-tinged drainage on the dressing during the first 2 days is normal.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry; protect it while bathing or showering.
- Remove the dressing 4 days after surgery.
- You may apply Band-Aids to the incisions or leave them open to air.
- Do not apply Bacitracin or other ointments.
- Avoid soaking in pools, lakes, hot tubs, or the ocean until sutures are removed and the incision is fully healed.

PAIN & INFLAMMATION

Ice

- Apply ice wrapped in a dry towel 20 minutes at a time, several times per day for the first week, then as needed.

Elevation

- You may notice that your fingers will get swollen if your arm hangs by your side for long periods of time. Keep your hand **elevated above your heart** as much as possible for the first 3 to 4 days. A pillow laid across your chest can be helpful.

Pain Medications

- Take your prescribed medications as directed.

Tylenol (Acetaminophen)

- First-line for pain.
- Take 1000 mg every 6–8 hours.
- Do not exceed 1000 mg per dose or 4000 mg per day (limit to 3000 mg/day if you have liver issues).
- Do not drink alcohol while taking Tylenol.

Oxycodone

- For moderate to severe breakthrough pain only.
- Use sparingly and wean off as soon as possible.

Common side effects include:

- Nausea: Take with food.
- Drowsiness: Do not drive or operate machinery.
- Itching: Benadryl may help.
- Constipation:
 - Use stool softeners (e.g., Senna-Docusate) or OTC options (Mineral Oil, Milk of Magnesia, etc).
 - Avoid bananas, rice, apples, toast, and yogurt (may worsen constipation).
 - Light walking helps stimulate bowel function.

Refills:

- If you think you will need a refill, you must request it during regular weekday office hours.

EMERGENCIES

You must have someone stay with you during the first 48 hours after surgery.

Call the clinic or the on-call orthopedist if:

- Drainage soaks the dressing, increases, smells foul, or if incisions become red, warm, or very painful.
- You develop a fever $>101.5^{\circ}\text{F}$ or chills.
- You experience leg or calf pain, swelling, or difficulty breathing.

FOLLOW-UP CARE

- Schedule a follow-up appointment at ~2 weeks postoperatively for a wound check, suture removal, and review of your surgery (if not already scheduled).
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Exercises

- When you are comfortable and ready you may perform the following exercises (**10 reps each, 3 times daily**). It may help to take your pain medication 20-30 minutes prior to the exercises.
1. **Grip strengthening:** With the arm in the sling, grip a rubber ball, old tennis ball, or beanbag. Hold for 5 seconds and release.
 2. **Shoulder shrugs:** Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears and hold for 10 seconds.
 3. **Elbow Stretches: VERY IMPORTANT. As above. Stretch the elbow until you hit the mechanical block on the brace (not shown in the photo).**

