



Post Operative Instructions: Proximal Humerus Fracture Fixation

ACTIVITY

- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIFT YOUR ARM OR REACH IN ANY DIRECTION (forward, to the side, or behind you) UNTIL GIVEN PERMISSION BY YOUR PHYSICIAN.

SLING

- Please wear the sling while sleeping until your first postoperative visit.
- We would like you to remove the sling 2-3 times a day to bend your elbow and wrist (refer to the next page). Please do not move your elbow away from your side.
- When the sling is off, you may sponge bathe your underarm and let it dry for hygiene.

NERVE BLOCK

- If you had a nerve block, you may experience the sensation of not being able to take a full, deep breath. This is because the nerve block often "numbs up" the nerve going to the half of the diaphragm on the operative side. Don't worry! You will still be able to breathe just fine, as you still have the other half of the diaphragm and all the rib muscles working normally.
- Most blocks will last anywhere from 24-72 hours. It is also normal to feel numbness or weakness in the hand or forearm during this time.
- If you find that you can't catch your breath or are working too hard to breathe, then obviously let us know or return to the emergency department.

DRESSING & INCISIONS

- The first two days after surgery, you can expect a small amount of red-tinged drainage on your dressings. This is normal.
- If you have a large brown cloth-surface dressing (looks like a giant Band-Aid):
 - Please leave this on until your follow-up appointment. We'll take it off for you in the office.
 - You may begin showering 2 or 3 days after surgery-- please just let the arm hang at the side, and keep the water primarily on the other side of your body. Pat the dressing dry when you are done to soak up any splashes.
- If you have clear plastic dressings (look like cellophane) or white foam tape or an elastic (ACE) wrap:
 - You may remove the dressing 4 days after surgery: make sure to remove the outer sticky clear plastic or tape, the white gauze pads, and the yellow gauze tape, but leave the paper strips -- called SteriStrips-- in place.
 - You may shower after dressings have been removed. Please just let the arm hang at the side, and keep the water primarily on the other side of your body. Pat the paper strips dry when you are

done to soak up any splashes or excess moisture. Be sure to let these dry over the course of a few hours before covering them with any Band-Aids, etc. (see next item below)

- If you wish, you may apply Band-Aids over the incisions if the strips are catching on your clothing. But you may also leave it open with just the paper strips covering the incision. This is plenty of protection.
- Please do not use Bacitracin or other ointments on the incisions.

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.

Swelling

- It is normal for your shoulder to be swollen from the fluid used during surgery. Your forearm and hand may become swollen in the days following surgery. Gravity pulls swelling down to your hand.

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°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 1-2 sets of 10, 1-2 times a day of each of the following exercises
- Grip strengthening: With the arm in the sling, grip a rubber ball, old tennis ball, or beanbag. Hold for 5 seconds and release.
- **Elbow range of motion:** With your arm bent at the elbow and against your body as if it were still in the sling, bend and straighten your elbow as if you were brushing something off of the front of your pants.



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- **Wrist rotation:** Turn your palm to face up toward the ceiling and hold for 5 - 10 seconds. Then turn the palm to face the floor and hold again. Bend your wrist
- **Pendulum:** Lean forward and hang your arm down towards the floor. Trace small letters of the alphabet with your finger on the floor. The arm movements must be PASSIVE! (Do not use your muscles to lift/move the arm). Make the letters bigger daily by a small amount.