



Post Operative Instructions: Elbow Fracture ORIF

ACTIVITY

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

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.
- 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.

Swelling- You may notice that your fingers will get swollen if your arm is hanging by your side for long periods of time, keep your arm **elevated above your heart** as much as possible for the first 2 to 3 days.

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).

EXERCISES

Once your pain is controlled and you feel comfortable, you may perform the following exercises (**10 reps each, three times daily**). It will help you to take your pain medication 20 to 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. **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. (Shoot for 45 degrees of forward motion and 45 degrees of sideways motion PASSIVELY).