



Post Operative Instructions: Distal Radius Fracture ORIF

ACTIVITY

- **You may NOT bear weight with your affected arm until cleared by your physician.**
 - You should move (straighten and bend) your fingers at least 10 times per day within your comfort zone to decrease swelling and prevent stiffness.
 - You may move your shoulder (raise it overhead) and elbow (bend and straighten) within your comfort zone to decrease swelling and prevent stiffness.
 - You may be able to do some typing or writing right after surgery. But swelling or stiffness may make it hard to do these things for 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.
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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.
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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 - Keep your arm elevated above your heart as much as possible for the first 3 to 4 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.
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- 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.
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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.
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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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