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Post-op Instructions for Total Shoulder Replacement

These instructions are to compliment the information given by the nursing staff and physical therapists. They cover many of the common questions.

Wound Care

- Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. You may change the dressing daily if desired. After removing the old dressing replace with 4x4 gauze pads and secure with tape. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. If this is happening, the dressing should be changed daily. Please leave the sutures/steri-strips in place.
- You may get the incision wet when showering 3 days after surgery. The shower should be brief and the wound patted dry with a clean towel. No baths or soaking the incision until 3 weeks after surgery and scabs are absent. It may be comfortable to use a rolled up towel as a pillow under your arm while showering.
- If purulent drainage (thick white or greenish in color) is coming from the wound, or the wound has increasing redness, or if you are having a temperature of 101, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

Pain

- Ice your shoulder as frequently as possible. We recommend 4-5 times per day for 20 minutes per time. You may use either the ice bag or cooling device given to you at the hospital. Or you may simply place ice in a zip lock bag, wrap it in a towel, and place on the shoulder.
- Narcotic pain medication will be prescribed for use after you leave the hospital. Try to wean down as tolerated. These medications can cause constipation and you may want to use an over the counter stool softener. Tylenol products may be used instead of the prescribed pain medication. The prescribed narcotic medications should not be taken at the same time as plain Tylenol. If a refill of medication is needed, please call the office during regular business hours, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In general, refills will not be made after hours or on weekends, so please plan ahead.

Driving

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol is allowed). Also, you must feel strong and alert. You may take your arm out of the sling to hold the bottom of the steering wheel. Most people start driving approximately 1-2 weeks after surgery, but use your judgment as to whether or not you feel ready and safe to drive.

Exercises

- Leave your arm in the sling during the first several days after surgery for comfort. You may take it out of the sling for range of motion exercises and showering. Feel free to adjust the sling as needed to make it more comfortable.
- Upon discharge from the hospital you are encouraged to perform hand, wrist and elbow range of motion exercises 4-5 times per day. These exercises will help to decrease swelling.

Follow-up

Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you at Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine for approximately 1 week after surgery.

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