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Post-op Instructions for Distal Radius Fracture Open Reduction Internal Fixation

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

Wound Care

- Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. If the ace wrap feels too tight, you may loosen it and re-wrap it.
- The splint should remain on until you follow-up in the clinic with your surgeon about two weeks after surgery.
- When showering, please place a plastic bag over the arm up to the shoulder and secure it with tape. To keep the splint dry, you may wrap a small towel around the splint prior to applying the plastic bag or wrap. Pat the splint dry immediately with a clean towel if it does get slightly wet.
- 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 or higher, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.
- Remember you are to be non-weight bearing with your surgical hand/wrist. This means no lifting at all. Please call our office if you have any questions regarding your restrictions.

Pain and Swelling

- To lessen pain and swelling, you may ice after surgery. Cover your splint with a thin towel or pillowcase. Put the ice in a zip lock bag or towel and place over the surgical site. We recommend 20 minutes, 2-3 times per day. Do not place ice or cooling devices directly on the skin for prolonged periods of time as it may damage the skin.
- Narcotic pain medication may 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. Plain Tylenol may be used instead of the prescribed pain medication, but prescribed narcotic medications should not be taken at the same time as the plain Tylenol. You may take anti-inflammatory medications such as Motrin, Aleve, and ibuprofen, but you should not take these medicines excessively and they can theoretically interfere with bone healing if taken for a prolonged period of time. 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.
- Swelling to some degree is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the hand above the heart level. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon. Flexion/extension of the fingers (opening and closing your hands) will also help to relieve swelling and prevent stiffness.

Exercises

- Gentle finger range of motion exercises can and SHOULD begin the day of surgery.

Driving

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol or ibuprofen is allowed). Also, you must feel strong and alert.

Follow-up

- Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you at Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine for approximately 2 weeks after surgery. At that time you will be fitted for a custom-made removable splint by an occupational therapist.

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