

Post-op Instructions for Olecranon ORIF

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 and the splint are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. The splint should remain on until you follow-up in the clinic with your surgeon. If the ace wrap feels too tight, you may loosen it and/or re-wrap it.
- When showering, please place a plastic bag over the arm up to the shoulder and secure it with tape. You may wrap your arm with Glad Press & Seal plastic wrap instead of a plastic bag. 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 or you may use a hair dryer on cool to dry.
- If you develop purulent drainage (thick white or greenish in color) from the wound, increasing redness, or a temperature of 101 or higher, please report these symptoms to your surgeon or the doctor on call.

Pain and Swelling

- To lessen pain and swelling, ice your elbow for the first 1-3 days after surgery. Put the ice in a zip lock bag or towel and place over the surgical site, or above your splint. We recommend 20 minutes, 4-5 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 will be prescribed for use, if needed, after you leave the hospital in limited amounts. Try to wean down/off as soon as you are able and only use narcotic medication for break through pain. Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or anti-inflammatories (Ibuprofen or Aleve) as main medications for pain control as/if appropriate. Add the narcotic medication for additional pain control if needed. It can help to stagger your pain medications. A refill is unlikely needed, but if 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 as they need to be picked up. Please plan ahead.
- Also narcotic medications can cause constipation so you may want/need to use an over the counter stool softeners/laxatives as needed.
- Swelling to some degree is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the hand above the heart level for the first 2-5 days after surgery. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon.

Exercises

- Gentle hand and finger range of motion exercises can begin the day of surgery. You should stay in your splint until your first follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

**Driving**

- To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills. Also, you must feel strong and alert.

Follow-up

- Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you for approximately 2 weeks after surgery.

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