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Post-op Instructions for Carpal Tunnel Release

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. 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.
- Dressings are to be kept on until your post op appointment. Please keep dressing dry; when showering or bathing, wrap a clean plastic bag around dressing to keep it dry.
- 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.

Pain and Swelling

- To lessen pain and swelling, ice your hand for the first 1-3 days after surgery. Put the ice in a zip lock bag or towel and place over the surgical site. We recommend 20 minutes, 4-5 times per day.
- 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. You may supplement your pain medication by using ibuprofen or Aleve for any breakthrough pain. It can help to stagger your pain medication with ibuprofen or Aleve as needed. 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 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 wrist range of motion exercises can begin the day of surgery. On post-op day three, you may start hand-strengthening exercises by squeezing a soft ball.

Driving

To drive you must no longer be taking narcotic pain pills (plain Tylenol 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 1-2 weeks after surgery.

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