
Hand and Upper Extremity Clinic

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Scapholunate Ligament Reconstruction Post Surgery Information and Care

Post-operative care for scapholunate ligament reconstruction involves keeping the surgical site clean and dry, elevating the arm to reduce swelling, and managing pain with medication as prescribed. You will be in a splint for 10-14 days and must avoid activities like lifting, pushing, pulling, and weight-bearing on the affected arm until cleared by your doctor. Gentle exercises for the unaffected joints will be recommended, followed by more specific rehabilitation after the initial healing period.

Immediate post-op (first 24-48 hours)

- **Immobilization:** Wear the post-operative splint (likely a [thumb spica splint](#)) at all times unless instructed otherwise.
- **Elevation:** Keep your arm elevated above the level of your heart to reduce swelling. This can be done by propping it on pillows when resting or sleeping.
- **Ice:** Apply ice packs for the first 24-48 hours to manage swelling, making sure the dressing stays dry.
- **Pain management:** Take pain medication as prescribed, and do not drink alcohol or drive.
- **Wound care:** Keep the splint and dressing clean and dry. To shower, cover the splint with a plastic bag sealed with tape.

Long-term precautions and exercises

- **Avoid restrictions:** Do not put weight on the arm, lift, push, or pull with the surgical arm until your doctor advises it is safe. This can take several months.
- **Follow-up appointments:** Attend all scheduled follow-up appointments for cast or splint changes and to have pins (if used) removed.

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- **Gentle exercises:** Start gentle range-of-motion exercises for the finger, elbow, and shoulder joints as instructed by your doctor or therapist to prevent stiffness in the unaffected joints.
- **Activity progression:** Follow your physical therapist's guidance for when to progress from gentle exercises to strengthening and functional movements.

When to contact your doctor

- **Infection:** Report signs of infection such as increased redness, drainage, or fever greater than 101.5°F.
- **Worsening symptoms:** Contact your doctor if swelling increases significantly, even with elevation, or if you experience numbness or color changes in your fingers.
- **Medication side effects:** Call the clinic if you experience uncomfortable side effects from your pain medication.