



Shoulder Arthroscopy Post-Op Instructions

The following information is designed to answer some of the frequently asked questions regarding what to expect and what to do after arthroscopic surgery. These are general guidelines, if you have any questions or concerns, please give us a call.

Dressing and Wound Care

During arthroscopic surgery, the joint is irrigated with water. There will typically be three or four small incisions and a longer incision near your axilla (under-arm) covered with a bulky dressing. After surgery, water may gradually leak through these incisions, saturating the bandage. This blood tinged drainage may persist for 24-36 hours. If it has not significantly decreased by this time, please call our office.

You may remove the dressing the day after surgery. Do not remove the steri-strips and try to keep them dry. Do not use ointments such as Neosporin on the incisions. As soon as the incisions are dry, you may leave them uncovered. You may shower the day after surgery, but the incisions should not be soaked (i.e., bathtub, hot tub, swimming pool, etc.). GLAD Press and Seal works as a great water barrier over your incisions. If the incisions show any signs of infection, please contact our office. Specifically, if there is increased redness, persistent drainage, if you have fever, or if the pain does not progressively decrease, you should call the office.

Ice

During the first 48 hours, ice can be helpful to decrease pain and swelling and is especially important during the first 24 hours. Ice bags/packs/ice machine should never be applied directly to the skin. They should be wrapped in a towel and applied. If the skin becomes very cold or burns, discontinue the ice application immediately. I recommend having the ice machine/cold packs on when you are not up and moving but apply with care.

Movement and Activity

Unless you have been otherwise instructed, you will be allowed to gently move your shoulder/arm as much as is comfortable immediately after surgery. An arm sling will be provided and can be used as necessary for comfort. For all shoulder surgeries, beginning the day after surgery, you should remove your arm from the sling and perform range of motion exercises for your elbow, wrist, and fingers.

If you had a rotator cuff repair or surgery for shoulder instability or dislocations you will be placed in a shoulder immobilizer after your surgery. You will need to wear this immobilizer at all times (day and night) for six weeks following your operation. You may take it off to shower and in order to put on a shirt. Please do not move your shoulder any more than you are instructed (for a rotator cuff and/or instability repair do not lift your arm from the side, only move the elbow/wrist/fingers).

Your level of discomfort will most often be your best guide in determining how much activity allowed. Remember, however, that it is very easy to “over-do” in the first few days after surgery and any increase in pain or swelling usually indicates that you need to decrease your activities.



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Medications

You will be given a prescription for pain medication. If you have any known drug allergies, check with the nurse prior to taking any medication. Please note that we are unable to call in prescriptions for narcotics after office hours. If you need a refill, please call the office early in the day. This is especially important if the weekend is approaching.

Some medications do have side effects. If you have any difficulty with itching, nausea, or other side effects, discontinue the medication immediately and call our office. Pain medication often causes drowsiness and we advise that you do not drive, operate machinery or make important decisions while taking medication.

Exercise/Physical Therapy

Physical therapy usually begins within a few days after your surgery or at your first post-op visit. The therapist will outline an exercise program specific to your type of surgery. The purpose of physical therapy is to help regain the mobility and strength in your shoulder. If you have any questions regarding your exercise program, please contact the physical therapist. If you do not know when or where your first therapy is, please contact the nurse and she can help clarify what you need to be doing.

First Post-Operative Visit

Your first post-operative appointment will be within a week following your surgery. The findings at surgery, long-term prognosis, and plans for rehabilitation will be discussed at this appointment. If you are unsure of when your follow up visit with Dr. Harlan is, please call the office and someone will help to get you scheduled.

Communications

If you are having any problems, contact us right away. Please call the office number, (816) 995-0204.

Remember, if your pain increases, check for signs of infection (redness, fever, etc.), decrease your activities, use ice and take your pain medication as prescribed. If the pain persists, or if there are signs of infection, call our office.