

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

What to Expect After Surgery

Name: _____

Pre-Op Date: _____

Surgery Date: _____

Post-Op Dates: 1st: _____

2nd: _____

Prescription Medication / Pain Management

- Surgery will cause pain and discomfort. You will be given multiple pain medications after surgery to help with this.
- **The goal of pain medications after surgery is to make the pain tolerable. It will not make you pain free.**
- Usually the pain medications consist of an anti-inflammatory and/or Tylenol as well as a short course of a narcotic-based medicine. These can be taken together as they work in different ways.
- Refer to the label on your medications and take as prescribed. **DO NOT** exceed the ordered dose. Do not take other pain medications you may have at home without consulting with our office or your surgeon.
- **Do not drive, operate heavy machinery, or drink alcohol while you are taking narcotic pain medications.** This includes Percocet, Vicodin, Oxycodone, Tylenol-3, etc.
- Due to new regulations, we are **VERY LIMITED ON REFILLS** and the amount we can prescribe. If you think you may need a refill, please call ahead as **we will not refill pain medications after-hours or on the weekend.**
- You may restart your home medications unless instructed otherwise by your surgeon.

Surgical Site Care

- Swelling will occur after your surgery and is normal. However, it can contribute to your pain. Elevating your extremity, ice application, and the use of ACE wraps/compression stockings/sleeves will help with this.
- You may experience a variety of symptoms in the area of surgery including discomfort sensitivity to touch, numbness, itchiness, and burning. This is usually normal and will improve with time.
- Keep your dressing clean and dry. Do not put tight clothing over it.
- You may remove your dressings on the **THIRD DAY (72 hours)** after your surgery and shower.
- When showering, you may allow water to flow over your incisions. Do not scrub the incision. After showering, pat your incisions dry with a towel.
- Please be mindful of your surroundings and maintain appropriate shower safety to prevent slips and falls.
- **DO NOT** submerge the incision(s) in a bath, hot tub, pool, lake, etc. for approximately 6 weeks or until medically cleared to do so by your surgeon.
- Do not apply creams, lotions, or other skin care products on your incisions.
- Your sutures will be removed during your first post-operative visit with your surgeon, usually about 7-14 days after surgery.

Activity and Brace/Sling Wear

- You may come out of surgery with a brace or sling already on. If given a brace or sling, follow the instructions provided to you by your orthopedic surgeon. In most instances this will involve wearing it around the clock until your first follow-up visit. You can remove your brace for showering, personal, hygiene, and for brief intervals while resting. Further brace/sling instructions will be provided and your follow-up visits.
- Follow the weight bearing and range of motion restrictions provided to you by your orthopedic surgeon. Use crutches as needed and follow the weight bearing and range of motion restrictions.
- **REHABILITATION AFTER SURGERY IS CRITICAL** and just as important as the surgery itself. This usually involves working with physical therapy (or athletic trainers) as well as doing exercises independently and regularly at home on your own. If you do not this, you will likely become stiff, painful, and have a poor outcome following surgery. You should have been provided with information on how to schedule physical therapy. **Physical therapy/rehabilitation should be setup and arranged prior to the date of surgery.** If you did not receive this information, or need help arranging this, please call the office prior to the surgery date for assistance.

Ice / Cold Therapy

- Swelling will occur after your surgery and is normal. However, it can contribute to your pain. **Elevating your extremity and ice application will help with swelling.**
- Start using the ice machine or a normal ice pack when you get home from surgery. It is critical that you use ice in the first 48 hours after surgery to help with pain and swelling.
- Only use the ice while awake and ensure that you have a barrier in between the ice pad and skin/incisions such as a towel or thicker clothing.
- Apply ice for 20 mins and take ice off for 40 mins every hour while awake.
- If you received an ice machine, conduct a pre-test prior to surgery to make sure that machine is in proper working condition. If it is not working correctly, please contact us and we will provide you with a new one.
- Instructions on set up of the machine are displayed on the side of the polar cube as well as listed below.

Other Surgery Concerns

- Nausea and/or vomiting also commonly occur after surgery. Medication is often prescribed at the time of surgery to assist with this. If you need a nausea/vomiting medication, please call the office for assistance.
- Constipation commonly occurs after surgery due to taking narcotic pain medication, being inactive, or both. Please take a stool softener to assist with this. Most bowel function returns to normal within a few days from surgery.
- Atelectasis is a common condition of the lungs which can occur after surgery. Taking 10 deep breaths once or twice very hour for the first few days after surgery can help to prevent this. An incentive spirometer can also be used.
- **DO NOT DRIVE** while taking narcotic pain medications after surgery. You should not drive until you have been re-evaluated at your first follow-up visit. Further instructions will be provided to you then.

Call or visit our orthopedic office first if you experience...

- Heavy bleeding or drainage from the surgical area
- Fever greater than 101 degrees F (38 C) / Chills. A low-grade fever less than 101 F degrees is common.
- **Severe** pain / pain that does not respond to maximum dose of pain medication, rest, ice, elevation
- Signs or symptoms of infection (**redness, warmth, yellow drainage, and persistent swelling to the site**)
- Chest pain, difficulty breathing, or new calf pain (**indication of a blood clot**)
- Opening of the incision

* **Please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room for immediate life or limb threatening emergencies**

* **For all other emergencies please go to Texas Health Harris HEB Hospital if possible**

Contact Information

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