

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS SHOULDER ARTHROSCOPY

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1. After arthroscopy the wound is covered with gauze and tape. These should generally be left in place for 24 hours. Due to the large amount of fluid used during the arthroscopy, it is normal to see some bloody drainage on the dressings. If bright red blood persists despite elevation and icing, please call the doctor. The dressing should be removed and wounds covered with Band-Aids on the first or second day after surgery. Do not remove the paper strips over the incision or cut any visible suture. Wounds should be kept dry for 24 hours. Showering is allowed with plastic covering the wounds. Unless otherwise instructed, after the post-op day 2, the wound may be exposed in the shower, without scrubbing the area. The wound should not be submerged in a bathtub or pool until the sutures are removed.
2. Patients are generally more comfortable sleeping in a reclining chair or with pillows propped behind the shoulder. Some difficulty with sleeping is common for 2-3 weeks after surgery.
3. Icing is very important for the first 5-7 postoperative days. While the bulky post-op dressing is in place, icing can be continuous. Once the dressing is removed on the first or second day, ice is applied for 20-minute periods 3-4 times per day. Care must be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin.
4. On the first post-op day, begin doing the physical therapy exercises that were given/instructed to you. You may use your arm to assist with dressing, eating and personal hygiene unless specifically instructed not to by Dr. Bush-Joseph. Be sure to use and move your hand, wrist, and elbow in order to decrease swelling in your arm. While exercise is important, don't over-do it. Common sense is the rule.
5. The anesthetic drugs used during your surgery may cause nausea for the first 24 hours. If nausea is encountered, drink only clear liquids (i.e. Sprite or 7-up). The only solids should be dry crackers or toast. If nausea and vomiting become severe or the patient shows sign of dehydration (lack of urination) please call the doctor or the surgicenter. A low-grade fever (100.5) is not uncommon in the first 24 hours but unusual beyond. Please call the doctor with any temperature over 101.0 degrees. You may take a baby aspirin (81 mg) a day until your sutures are removed in the office. This may lower the risk of a blood clot developing after surgery. Should severe calf pain occur or significant swelling of calf and ankle, please call the doctor.

6. Local anesthetics (i.e. Novocaine) are put into the joint during surgery. It is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery. This is the time when swelling peaks. Using the pain medication as directed will help control pain with little risk of complication. Taking pain medication before bedtime will assist in sleeping. It is important not to drink or drive while taking narcotic medication. If you were prescribed narcotic medication (i.e. vicodin, hydrocodone, darvocet) you can supplement those medications with 200 mg or 400 mg of ibuprofen every 4-6 hours. You should resume your normal medications for other conditions the day after surgery. We have no specific diet restrictions after surgery but extensive use of narcotics can lead to constipation. High fiber diet, lots of fluids, and muscle activity can prevent this occurrence.**Narcotic medications can cause nausea, disorientation, and constipation. Adequate hydration and over the counter stool softeners can minimize constipation problems.
7. Following shoulder surgery, it is common to use a sling for 3-5 days after surgery. In some cases, you will be instructed to stay in your sling for a longer period. You will be instructed on gentle range of motion exercises to be started the night of surgery. Passive range of motion (using the opposite hand to move the operated arm) is always encouraged and can speed recovery. Bruising down into the elbow and chest wall is not uncommon. Sleeping is usually aided by placing a pillow behind the operated shoulder.
8. The doctor will need to reexamine you 7-10 days after shoulder surgery. Please call the office to schedule a follow-up appointment.
9. If unexpected problems occur and you need to speak to the doctor, call the office.
Dr. Bush-Joseph can be reached at 312-432-2345.
Travis Smith his Physician Assistant can be reached at 312-432-2372.
The answering service will answer after business hours when you dial 312-243-4244. If for some reason you are unable to get through to the answering service, you can reach the Rush Orthopedic resident on call at 312-942-5000. The resident on call may not be on Dr. Bush-Joseph's service and may not be familiar with your case, so always try to reach us through the answering service first.