



## Rotator Cuff Repair Post-Operative Patient Instructions

### DIET

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jellos, soups, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

### WOUND CARE

- Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the hand occurs.
- It is normal for the shoulder to bleed and swell after surgery. If blood soaks through the bandage, do not become alarmed, reinforce with additional dressing.
- **Your first dressing change will be at the initial post-operative visit.** This will typically occur 7-14 days after your surgery. You will receive further wound care instructions during your first post-operative visit.
- **To avoid infection, keep surgical dressings clean and dry.** If you'd like, you may shower by placing a large plastic bag over your shoulder and sling beginning the day after surgery. Sponge bathing is an acceptable alternative to showering if you are concerned you will not be able to keep the surgical dressings dry in the shower.
- After the initial dressing change, it is ok to shower with warm water and soap. Do not scrub or soak the wound. • **Do not submerge** the surgical site in water until given approval by your surgical team. This includes baths, tubs, pools, or other bodies of water.
- Please do not place any ointments, lotions, or creams directly over or around the incisions.

### MEDICATIONS

- You may receive a preoperative nerve block or, alternatively, local anesthetics may be injected into the wound and shoulder joint at the time of surgery. The effects of anesthesia will usually wear off within 8-12 hours and it is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery when swelling peaks.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a few days post-operatively – please follow the medication instructions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease side effects, take the medication with food. If constipation occurs, consider taking an over the counter laxative and/or stool softener. • If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office. It may be necessary to change your medications.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication or while in sling. •

Please avoid alcohol use while taking narcotic pain medication.

- If you are having pain that is not being controlled by the pain medication prescribed, you may take an over the counter anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen or naproxen in between doses of pain medication. This will help to decrease pain and decrease the amount of narcotic medication required. Please take as directed on the bottle.
- For 2 weeks following surgery take one aspirin daily to lower the risk of developing a blood clot after surgery. Please contact the office should you experience severe calf pain or significant swelling of the calf or ankle occurs.

### ACTIVITY

- Wear your post op sling for a total of 4-6 weeks (this includes sleeping and throughout the day). • Unless otherwise instructed the arm should remain in the sling at all times (23.5 out of 24 hours a day). • When sleeping or resting, you may find inclined positions (ie: reclining chair) and a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort. Be sure to wear your sling even in these positions.
- It is okay to remove the sling **ONLY** for hygiene, dressing, and when instructed to start a home exercise program by your surgeon or PT.
- Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling.
- Avoid long periods of sitting or long distance traveling for 2 weeks.
- **NO** driving until instructed otherwise by physician, it is illegal to drive in a sling.
- It is okay to return to **sedentary work** or **school** after post-operative day 3-4 if shoulder pain is tolerable.

### SHOULDER SLING AND IMMOBILIZER

- Your sling with supporting pillow (immobilizer) should be worn at all times (except for hygiene).



- With your arm in the sling, keep your elbow positioned against the pillow and in front of your body at all times to minimize stress on the repair.
- Keep a pillow behind the elbow when lying down to prevent the elbow from sliding backwards.

### ICE THERAPY

- Icing is important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery. ● Use ice packs for 30-45 minutes every 2 hours daily until your first post-operative visit.
- Care should be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin. Do not place ice directly against skin, use a towel or blanket between ice and your skin to minimize risk of frostbite.
- You do not need to wake up in the middle of the night to ice unless you are uncomfortable.

### EXERCISE

- Begin exercises (pendulums and flexion/extension at the elbow without resistance) 24 hours after surgery unless otherwise instructed. You may undo the sling around your forearm to allow for elbow flexion/extension.
- While maintaining your elbow by the side, you may begin hand and wrist movements immediately. ● Formal physical therapy (PT) typically begins 2-4 weeks following surgery.
- You will be given additional instructions at your first post-operative visit.



### EMERGENCIES

**Please contact our clinic at 310-310-2729 or go to the nearest emergency room for any of the following:**

- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal).
- Unrelenting pain.
- Chills or Fever over 101° – it is normal to have a low-grade fever for the first day or two following surgery ● Redness around incisions.
- Color change in distal arm and/or hand.
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected).
- Difficulty breathing.
- Excessive nausea/vomiting.
- Calf pain.
- For any emergencies requiring immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.

### FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

- Our post-operative care coordinators will contact you with the date and time of your initial post-operative appointment in the days immediately following surgery. If you do not receive your post-operative appointment within the first week, please contact the **MM Orthopaedics at 310-310-2729** to schedule an appointment.
- The initial post-operative appointment following surgery is usually scheduled 7-14 days following surgery. ● The first post-operative appointment will be to assess the wound, go over post-operative protocol, and answer any questions you may have regarding your procedure.
- For any further questions contact **MM Orthopaedics at 310-310-2729**.