

#### WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

- It is normal to have some pain or discomfort after surgery. We perform a great variety of procedures. Fortunately, for many of our patients, the degree of discomfort is minimal and may require medication for only a day or so. Not all procedures require narcotic pain medications after surgery. If the procedure does require post op medication, we will write one prescription on the day of surgery. We do not typically need to refill pain medication, In the rare, we do not accept refill requests over the phone.
- After surgery, your arm or hand may be profoundly numb for about 8 to 12 hours after surgery, and somewhat numb for longer. Do not let this numbness alarm you! Numbness lasting days after surgery is normal, and especially normal if you had numbness before surgery. Post-operative swelling can cause/contribute to numbness, this will subside as the swelling subsides. Be careful not to burn yourself or hurt yourself while your hand is numb.
- You may see some bleeding or drainage from the surgery site through your dressing. Bruising at the operative site is normal. You will usually get some black and blue discoloration around the area of the incision. It will travel down your arm over the next few days (from gravity and elevating your arm). This is normal and comes from blood seeping through the tissues.

#### WHAT TO DO AT HOME

**ICE** - Ice bags should be applied to the outside of the dressing for 20 minutes at a time for the first few days. Even with the bulky bandages the ice will help to decrease the swelling.

**ELEVATE** - Our patients tell us that elevating their arm above the level of their heart level is more effective in relieving pain than any medication. Dressings can become tight from the swelling underneath. If this happens, elevate the limb. Elevation helps to prevent swelling, and swelling will decrease your ability to move your fingers later on. Therefore, keep your arm elevated above your heart for two to three days after surgery as needed. If putting it up at shoulder level is not sufficient to help the pain, put it up higher (the "Statue of Liberty" position). I know that it is hard to keep your arm elevated once you fall asleep. Just do the best you can. A sling alone does not keep your hand above your heart, so use it sparingly when you cannot control your arm due to the anesthetic.

**FOR BREAKTHROUGH PAIN** - as long as you don't have any allergies or other health conditions that prevent you from taking it, you may take over the counter Motrin or Ibuprofen (which also includes Advil or Aleve) in between the doses of your pain medication. You may have been prescribed Promethazine in addition to pain medication. Promethazine is used to prevent and control nausea and vomiting that may occur after surgery, and with other medications it has shown to help relieve pain after surgery.

**DRESSING** - Occasionally your dressing can become too tight due to swelling, in this case, loosen the ace bandage while keeping the surgical dressing in place to not expose your incision. If your dressing becomes too loose or you notice that it has fallen off in your sleep, DO NOT PANIC, just reinforce the dressing and keep it covered the best you can until your post op appointment. Keep the dressing clean and dry. Use a plastic bag while showering. There are cast covers available online and in some local pharmacies. However, many patients have reported that plastic bag with rubber bands or tape, are equally sufficient. We will remove your surgical dressings at your office or therapy (if required) visit after surgery.

#### RETURNING TO ACTIVITIES

The goal of surgery is to improve your condition and get you back to your regular activities as tolerated as quickly as possible.

- Do not drive until you are confident that you can drive safely. There is no reliable way that we can say when it is safe for you to drive, you will need to be honest with yourself. Don't drive if you are not comfortable doing so.
- For most surgeries patients are able to return to work as early as the next day. Some surgeries require patients to be off work for a period of one week. The most common protocol for returning to work is to return to work with one handed duty (you can return to work with the restriction of not using the extremity that was operated on. Other restrictions may include returning with cast/brace (if this applies to you) after your post operation appointment.
- If your employer requires a note to return to work, **YOU MUST REQUEST A RETURN TO WORK NOTE AT THE TIME OF YOUR FOLLOW UP VISIT.**

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