



### **Dr. Heinrich - Post operative instructions for Elbow**

**DIET** - Begin with clear liquids and light foods. Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

**WOUND CARE** - Maintain your operative dressing and keep your arm in the sling. If blood tinged fluid soaks onto the bandage, do not become alarmed—reinforce with additional dressing. It is normal for your shoulder, hand and fingers to be swollen after surgery. Your body will reabsorb this over the next several days/week.

**KEEP THE DRESSING CLEAN AND DRY.** Sponge bathing may be the easiest means of cleaning oneself. You may remove the bandages **TWO DAYS** after surgery to take a shower. Do not submerge extremity under water. You can just apply bandaids over the incision sites to keep in covered and then reapply ACE bandage. You will notice bruising about the shoulder and sometimes down into the elbow and fingers. The incision at the elbow has an absorbable suture with glue over it to hold it in place. Please don't pick at your incisions or remove any sutures until you come back for your post operative visit.

**MEDICATIONS** - Pain medication is injected into the incisions and around nerves during surgery. — this will wear off in 4 hours.

Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time. This should be take as directed on the bottle. Common side effects of the pain medication include, nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease the side effects, take medication with food. If constipation occurs, take an over the counter laxative. You are also given a medication for any nausea/vomiting called Zofran or Phenergen that you may take as needed. However, if this does not help and you continue to have problems with nausea and vomiting, please contact the office.

Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic pain medication.

Ibuprofen up to 800mg three times a day (every 8 hours) may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post operative peaks and valleys to reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usages. You can take both the Ibuprofen and the narcotic if necessary but keep each individual medication on their own schedule. For example, if you take the narcotic (every 4-6hours) at 12pm you can take it again at 6pm. You make take Ibuprofen (every 8 hours) at 2pm and then take again at 10pm.

### **ACTIVITY** -

NO driving until otherwise instructed by Dr. Heinrich. Driving is allowed when you are no longer taking narcotic pain medication. You may return to sedentary work only or school 3-4 days after surgery if pain is tolerable



**ICE THERAPY** - Begin immediately after surgery. Use icing machine continuously or ice packs if machine not prescribed 30 minutes every 2 hours daily until your first post operative visit. This will help reduce pain and swelling arm. There should be a separate instructions sheet in your surgery packet for how to use the ice machine. Please call the office if you need further instructions.

**EXERCISE** - Discomfort and arm stiffness is normal for a few days following surgery. Avoid lifting your arm without the aid of your therapist or your other arm.

**EMERGENCIES** - contact the office at 214-265-3260 or Dr. Heinrich directly at 214-326-9141 for:

- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever (over 101.5) - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery or chills.
- Extreme redness around incisions
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea and vomiting
- Color change in wrist or hand

**APPOINTMENTS** - You will have your first operative appointment made by the surgery scheduler. This appointment is typically 10-14 days after your surgery. If you did not get an appointment made at the time you were scheduled for surgery it is your responsibility to call the office after surgery to make one in the appropriate time frame.

We appreciate you trusting us with your care. We know that surgery is a big deal and we are here to help you make it through so you can get back to doing what you enjoy!!!