



Post-Operative Instructions – Rotator Cuff Repair

Diet

- Start with clear liquids and light foods.
- Return to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

Wound Care

- Keep your operative dressing in place and keep your arm in the sling.
- Mild blood-tinged drainage is normal; reinforce with additional dressing if needed.
- Swelling in the shoulder, hand, and fingers is expected and will improve over several days to a week.
- Keep dressing clean and dry.
- Sponge bathing is recommended.
- Remove bandages 2 days after surgery to shower.
 - Do not submerge the arm in water.
 - You may remove the sling for showering but must reapply it afterward.
 - Apply Band-Aids over incision sites after showering.
- Bruising around the shoulder, elbow, and fingers is normal.
- Small armpit incisions may have absorbable sutures with glue—do not pick at or remove anything.
- Do not remove sutures until your post-op visit.

Medications

- Nerve block medication lasts 8–24 hours.
- Narcotic pain medication may be needed briefly; take as directed.
- Common side effects: nausea, drowsiness, constipation.
 - Take with food.
 - Use over-the-counter laxatives if constipated.
- Anti-nausea medication (Zofran or Phenergan) may be taken as needed.
- Contact the office if nausea/vomiting persists.
- Do not drive or operate machinery while taking narcotics.
- Ibuprofen (up to 800 mg every 8 hours) may be taken between narcotic doses to:
 - Smooth pain peaks and valleys
 - Reduce narcotic use
 - Extend time between doses
- Keep each medication on its own schedule (example provided in original instructions).

Activity

- Wear your sling at all times, including while sleeping.
- A recliner may be more comfortable than lying flat.
- No driving until cleared by Dr. Heinrich AND you are off narcotics AND no longer required to wear the sling while driving.
- Return to sedentary work or school in 3–4 days if pain is tolerable.



Ice Therapy

- Begin immediately after surgery.
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs for 1 hour, 4 times daily.
- Continue until your first post-op visit.
- Refer to the ice machine instruction sheet; call the office if you need help.

Exercise

- Some discomfort and stiffness are normal.
- Avoid lifting your arm without assistance from your therapist or your other arm.
- Formal physical therapy will begin after your post-op visit.
- Protocols are available at johnheinrichmd.com.

When to Call the Office

Call 214-265-3260 or Dr. Heinrich at 214-326-9141 for:

- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever over 101.5°F or chills
- Extreme redness around incisions
- Continuous drainage or bleeding (small amount is normal)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Color changes in wrist or hand

Appointments

- First post-op appointment is typically 10–14 days after surgery.
- If not already scheduled, call the office to arrange it.