



Post-Operative Instructions – Shoulder Replacement

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.

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 30 minutes every 2 hours.
- 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.

Dental Work / Cleanings

- Antibiotics are required for 6 months after joint replacement before dental work.
- First dental cleaning/work should be scheduled no sooner than 3 months after surgery.

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

Things to remember:

- Movement is medicine. So many people believe that their arthritis came from being too active. The reality is most people who develop arthritis get it from not moving enough. Our joints and cartilage stay healthy through load and circulation. If you want to feel better (before and after surgery), you've got to move every day.
- Surgery is just one hour in a journey of thousands. That single hour in the OR is only the start of your recovery...what happens in the months that follow HUGELY determines your outcome. Your surgeon can replace your joint, but only you can rebuild your body through exercise, mindset, sleep, nutrition and positivity. Those things make or break recovery just as much as the scalpel.
- You control more of your outcome than you realize. The people who recover best believe they're in charge of their results and create a reality that guarantees success. They don't blame circumstances. They focus on what they can control: their attitude, their effort, and their environment. That internal locus of control is one of the strongest predictors of success in surgery, and life.
- Stop comparing yourself to others. Comparison steals joy and blinds you to your progress. Be proud of yourself for every little step forward, no matter how small!