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Sports Medicine  
Shoulder, Elbow & Knee Arthroscopy  
Shoulder Replacement Surgery  
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**POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**  
Anatomic Total Shoulder Arthroplasty

*Initial recovery after shoulder surgery entails healing, controlling swelling and discomfort, regaining some shoulder motion. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you achieve these goals until your 1<sup>st</sup> postoperative visit*

**DIET**

- Your first few meals after surgery should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated
- Remember to stay hydrated and eat a high-fiber diet with extra fresh fruits and vegetables

**WOUND CARE**

- Your incision was closed with dissolvable sutures that do not require removal
- You may shower immediately after shower with the protective plastic dressing.
- Keep dressing on until your postoperative appointment
- Keep incision out of direct sunlight until the scar fades (months)
- Please do not place any ointments lotions or creams directly over the incisions
- If garments irritate the incision, feel free to cover it with a band-aid or gauze

**MEDICATIONS**

- Local anesthetics are injected around the shoulder at the time of surgery. This will 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 short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.
  - **Narcotic prescriptions may be refilled up to 2 times**
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease the side effects take the medication with food. If constipation occurs, consider taking an over the counter laxative.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medications changed.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication.
- 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 4 weeks following surgery take one aspirin 325mg tablet twice daily to lower the risk of developing a blood clot after surgery (unless you are already on a different blood thinner – i. e. , coumadin, Xarelto, lovenox, etc). Please contact the office should severe calf pain occur or significant swelling of the calf or ankle occur

### ACTIVITY

- Wear sling at all times, removing it only to shower, dress /undress, or for any prescribed exercises . **Do not drive while in your sling and /or on narcotic medications**
- When getting dressed /undressed, gently assist your elbow into a hanging position and learn over with your arm hanging down like a weight on a string if you need to access your armpit or slide on a shirt sleeve – do not raise your arm from your side against gravity
- Move your elbow, wrist and fingers frequently to prevent swelling
- Stay hydrated and walk frequently to avoid pneumonia, blood clots and constipation

### ICE THERAPY

- Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery .
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if machine not prescribed) 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 . Keep some barrier (clothing, towel, dressing) between the ice and your bare skin
- You do not need to wake up in the middle of the night to change over the ice machine or icepacks unless you are uncomfortable .

### EXERCISE

- Begin exercises (active elbow flexion /extension without resistance) 24 hours after surgery unless otherwise instructed .
- While maintaining your elbow by the side, begin elbow, hand, and wrist exercises immediately
- Formal physical therapy (PT) typically begins 2–4 week following surgery

### EMERGENCIES

- Contact Dr . Swindell’s team at 718–246–8700 if any of the following are present:
  - Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal) .
  - Unrelenting pain .
  - Fever (over 101° – it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills .
  - Redness around incisions .
  - Color change in arm
  - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected) .
  - Difficulty breathing

- Excessive nausea /vomiting
- Calf pain
- If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the office at 718-246-8700 and you will be connected to our answering service.
  - If you are enrolled in Epic Connect, you can also reach the office through the patient portal
- If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.

#### **FOLLOW-UP CARE /QUESTIONS**

- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact our scheduler at 718-246-8700 schedule.
- Typically the first post-operative appointment following surgery is 10-14 days following surgery.
- At your first post operative appointment, you will have a wound check, go over physical therapy protocols and we will answer any questions you may have about the procedure.