

Paul Rothenberg MD
Sports Medicine and Shoulder Surgery
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Elbow Surgery Post-Surgical Instructions

First 24-48 Hours:

- Rest and Relax
- You may have minimal pain for the first 12-24 hours, afterwards you may experience an increase in pain, this is normal, the nerve block that was provided preoperatively typically wears off at this time. Take your first dose of pain medication when you begin to feel “pins and needles.” This is an early indication the anesthetic is wearing off.

Activity and Wound Care:

- Take it easy for the first 72 hours after surgery. No strenuous activity.
- Ice packs can be applied to the dressing for 20 minute periods at a time, with 20 minutes ice free intervals. This can be done as needed for pain control and is most useful for the first 72 hours
- Splint is to be worn at all times, do not remove
- Keep splint dry.

Medications:

- A number of medications will be prescribed to you. Please take with food and water.
- Please take the medication as prescribed on the bottle. Below is a description of each medication.
- The medications we typically use are as follows:
 - Percocet (Oxycodone/Acetaminophen)
 - Strongest pain medication, to be taken every 4-6 hours as needed for pain
 - Tramadol
 - Weaker pain medication than Percocet. Use this when you no longer have Percocet, or if the Percocet makes you feel drowsy/nauseous, or if your pain is not severe
 - Zofran (Ondansetron)
 - Nausea medication, to be taken as needed for Nausea/Vomiting
 - Colace
 - Medication for constipation. Anesthesia and pain medication can lead to constipation.
- Please note: Narcotics are a strong medication with potential side effects that include; addiction, constipation, over-dose, nausea and additional issues not listed here. Very important to only take as prescribed.

□ Note – should you experience stomach problems or if your body is not tolerating any of the medications above, STOP the medications. You may discontinue the above medications as you see fit and take “Tylenol”

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Splint Use:

- Splint is typically worn for 1 week and is removed in the office.
- On occasion splint will be worn for 2 weeks, this will be communicated directly with you.
- You should move your fingers and hand regularly to prevent stiffness. Getting a stress relief ball to squeeze may be of benefit.
- When splint is removed, we will typically transition you to a hinged elbow brace. However on occasion we will transition you to a sling and wrist brace.

Physical Therapy:

- In your discharge papers, you will be given a prescription for physical therapy.
- If there is no PT prescription, in your folder, then you will be given one at your first postop appointment.
- Contact our office to locate physical therapy facilities around the area of your choice.
- Physical therapy begins after splint is removed in the office, 1-2 weeks after your surgery.

Return to Work or School:

- You may return to work (sedentary) typically 1 week after surgery if pain is tolerable.
- Returning to labor depends on the specifics of the surgery and this will be communicated directly to you.

Normal Sensations and Findings after Surgery:

- Nerve block – will stay in effect 8-24 hours from the time of surgery. This may cause numbness and inability to use the extremity including fingers until the block wears off.
- Persistent numbness at hand – usually resolves 2-3 days after surgery.
- An increase or surge in the amount of pain after the block wears off. See Pain Medications instructions above.
- Elbow pain and swelling can last up to 6 weeks.
- Swelling at the hand. Moving your hand and using the squeeze ball can help alleviate this.
- If swelling is not alleviated by moving your hand, it's possible the ace wrap around your splint is too tight. Please contact the office and we will instruct you on loosening your acewrap, or instruct you to come into the office to be seen.
- Low grade temperature under 101.5 degrees. If this occurs, a) drink plenty of fluids, b) cough, c) take 10 deep, slow breaths and hold for a second and cough forcefully afterwards.

NOTIFY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OCCUR:

- Change in incision (increased redness, drainage, incision opens up, suture comes out, foul smell, yellow discharge).
- Sharp pains at shoulder.
- Temperature over 101.5 degrees.
- Fevers, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.
- Pain not relieved by pain medications.

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Post-Surgical Appointments:

Typically 10-14 days after surgery. The date and time is in your post op folder. If you do not see an appointment in your folder. Please call my surgical scheduler at 201-975-2323 ext. 12696