



## **POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS SHOULDER - AC JOINT RECONSTRUCTION**

**PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS COMPLETELY AND ASK FOR CLARIFICATION IF NECESSARY - DIRECT QUESTIONS TO YOUR NURSE BEFORE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL OR VIA PHONE/EMAIL TO DR COLE'S STAFF AFTER ARRIVING HOME**

**EMERGENCY HOTLINE # 312-243-4244**

### **WOUND CARE**

- Remove surgical dressing 48 hours after surgery – large band-aids can be placed over the incisions, covering them completely. It is okay to shower directly over the band-aids as long as the incisions stay dry until your first post-operative appointment in clinic.
- Loosen bandage if swelling or progressive numbness occurs in the extremity.
- It is normal for the joint to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks onto the bandage, simply reinforce with additional gauze dressing for the remainder of day and check again.

LEAVE THE STERI-STRIP TAPE IN PLACE OVER INCISIONS UNTIL FIRST APPOINTMENT

### **MEDICATIONS**

- Pain medication is injected into the wound and joint during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours. It is recommended to begin the prescription pain medication provided to you upon arriving home, and continue every 4 hours for the first 1-2 days after surgery.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your pain medication changed or something additional prescribed for nausea (312-243-4244 – ask for Dr. Cole's team to be paged).
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To help minimize risk of side effects, take medication with food – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter stool softener such as Dulcolax or Colace.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication.
- As long as you have no personal history of adverse response to anti-inflammatories, use an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (i.e. Advil/Motrin) 600-800 mg as frequently as every 8 hours with food to help swelling and pain in addition to the prescribed pain medication.

### **ICE THERAPY**

- Begin immediately after surgery - use the ice machine (when prescribed) as directed for the first 2-3 days following surgery. Ice at your discretion thereafter. When using "real" ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage / frostbite of skin. In either case, check the skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering or other signs of frostbite.
- Remember to keep the extremity elevated while icing when able.
- For technical questions regarding the ice machine, please contact the vendor directly using the telephone number on the device.

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## **ACTIVITY**

- Remain in sling at all times other than personal hygiene and wardrobe changes.
- Okay to remove sling 3x daily for bending of elbow, wrist, hand beginning on the first post-operative day.
- Do not engage in activities which increase shoulder pain over the first 7-10 days following surgery.
- NO driving until off narcotic pain medication.
- Okay to return to work when ready and able. Please notify office if written clearance is needed.

## **EXERCISE**

- Begin exercises 3x daily starting the day after surgery. Please perform ONLY wrist flexion/extension, elbow flexion/extension. Shoulder stiffness and discomfort is normal for a few days following surgery.
- Avoid movement of the arm against gravity or away from the body.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin after your first post-operative visit if necessary.

## **DIET**

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jello, soups, etc.).
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated.

### **\*\*EMERGENCIES\*\***

- Contact Dr. Cole's practice hotline at 312-243-4244 if any of the following are present:
  - Painful swelling or numbness that progressively worsens
  - 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 that worsens
  - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Excessive nausea/vomiting

### **DO NOT CALL THE HOSPITAL OR SURGICENTER FOR EMERGENCIES**

**IF YOU HAVE A NEED THAT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ATTENTION, PROCEED TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM**

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

- Someone from Dr. Cole's team will call you on your first day after surgery to address any questions or concerns. If you have not been contacted within 48 hours of surgery, please call 312-432-2379 or email [colepa@rushortho.com](mailto:colepa@rushortho.com).
- Email any non-emergent questions to [colepa@rushortho.com](mailto:colepa@rushortho.com) for the fastest reply. If e-mail is not an option please call the practice at 312-432-2379.
- If you do not already have a postoperative appointment scheduled, please contact the scheduler during normal office hours at 708-236-2701 or email [coleadmin@rushortho.com](mailto:coleadmin@rushortho.com) to arrange an appointment 7-15 days from surgery.

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## POST OPERATIVE SHOULDER EXERCISES

### WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION



Actively bend wrist forward.  
Then backwards as far as you can.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.

### ELBOW FLEXION / EXTENSION



With palm either UP, DOWN, or THUMBSIDE UP  
gently bend elbow as far as possible.  
Hold for 5 seconds.  
Then straighten arm as far as possible.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.  
**\*\*DO NOT PERFORM THIS EXERCISE IF  
BICEP TENODESIS WAS PERFORMED\*\***