



Brian J. Cole, MD, MBA

Sports Medicine and Surgery
Shoulder, Elbow, and Knee
Cartilage Restoration



MIDWEST
ORTHOPAEDICS
at RUSH

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS ELBOW - ULNAR NERVE DECOMPRESSION

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

- It is normal for the incision to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks through the dressing, simply reinforce with additional gauze dressing for the remainder of day and check again. The post-op wrap and dressing should stay on the elbow until the first post-operative visit in clinic.

MEDICATIONS

- Pain medication is injected into the wound 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 as frequently as 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 include nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To 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

- Due to the dressing and splint, it will be difficult to apply ice to the surgical site on the elbow. A medium to large ice pack can be placed over the 'open' region of the elbow for 30 mins at a time.
- When using "real" ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage / frostbite of skin. In either case, check any exposed skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering or other signs of frostbite.

ACTIVITY

- Remain in sling at all times other than personal hygiene and wardrobe changes
- Okay to remove sling 3x daily for movement of wrist, hand, fingers beginning first post-operative day.
- Do not engage in activities which increase arm 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.

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EXERCISE/PT

- Exercises specific to your procedure will be given to you by Dr. Cole's team in some cases.
- 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.
- Email any non-emergent questions to 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 to arrange an appointment 7-15 days from surgery.

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