

HAND SURGERY POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Keep your hand or other operated part as high as possible at all times. The best way to do this when standing or sitting upright is to hold the hand across the chest in front of the other shoulder. For in bed, see the diagram insert. Elevation is the most important way to control both **PAIN** and **swelling**.
2. Keep the dressing clean, absolutely dry, and undisturbed at all times. It will be changed at your first post operative visit.
3. Move any joints that are not immobilized through as full a range of motion as possible, as often as possible. Especially pay attention to the **shoulder** reaching all the way over the head and the **elbow** going all the way straight.
4. You may apply ice in a bag over the area of operation to help with **PAIN** control. This technique is usually only effective during the first several days after surgery.
5. If you have any new numbness in your fingers, fingertips turning white or blue, or see new bright red bleeding coming through the dressing, call the doctor **IMMEDIATELY**. If you develop chest pain, shortness of breath, or other serious and acute symptoms, call **911**. If any of your usual medical problems flare up after surgery, call the doctor who **normally** takes care of those problems for you.
6. If your anesthesia involved a breathing tube of any kind, you may be hoarse, have a sore throat, and even spit up small amounts of blood.
7. Do not try to eat too much too soon. This may result in nausea due to the narcotic pain medications and anesthesia.
8. Try to fill your prescriptions at a pharmacy that has extended hours. When you need the refill, you want them to be open.
9. Your pain medication prescription has been written for well more medication than you should require before your next office visit and may have a refill. If, however, you feel you must reach us regarding your prescriptions or post-op medications prior to the next office visit, you **MUST plan ahead** and call in during regular office hours. Calls related to prescriptions will **NOT** answered after hours unless tied in to a medical emergency situation.
10. After having had surgery, no pain medication is capable of taking away **ALL** the pain. But taking the pills on regular 4 hour intervals without missing any doses will give you the best chance of having less pain.
11. Your first follow up visit with the doctor should be in approximately 10 days. Call the office if you are unsure about your appointment. It is possible you will be seen by a Hand Therapist before you see the doctor. This is usually arranged prior to surgery.

PRE-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Be very careful not to get any cuts or scratches on your arms or hands before surgery, as these can be a source of infection. The worst of all are cat scratches. Do not even play with your cat the week before surgery. If an inflamed cut or scratch is present on the morning of surgery, your surgery may have to be rescheduled.
2. Keep your hands as clean as possible in the last few days before surgery. Remove all grease dirt and oil as meticulously as possible especially from under the fingernails. Remove all fingernail polish.
3. Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery.
4. If you have critical medications to take (such as cardiac medications), you may take these with a tiny sip of water.
5. For 10 days prior to surgery do not take any aspirin compounds or antiinflammatory pain relievers such as Aspirin, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Aleve, Nuprin, Voltaren, Orudis, etc. Tylenol is OK.
6. Write down on a sheet of paper a list of all medications you are currently taking and their doses along with a list of your major medical problems and previous surgeries. This is to make it easier for you when the hospital personnel will be asking for all this information.
7. Wear loose clothing that can fit over a bulky splint for the return trip home. Leave all jewelry at home. You must enter the OR wearing a hospital gown; the hospital will not be responsible for jewelry you take off in the pre-op holding area.
8. You must have someone to drive you. You will not be allowed to leave the hospital unaccompanied after surgery. It is not advisable to drive with a splint.
9. The scheduled check in time is well in advance of your surgical time. There will be some waiting. Bring something to read.
10. Make sure to leave your phone number with the pre op nurses. Surgical schedules change during the day due to emergencies etc. The hospital must have a way to contact you.
11. If you are scheduled for outpatient surgery you will be able to leave several hours after your surgery is finished. If you are scheduled for a "23 hour stay", you will leave the following morning.