



Charlotte Shoulder Institute

Patient Centered. Research Driven. Outcome Maximized.

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DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS & PHYSICAL THERAPY INSTRUCTIONS FOR HAND SURGERY

Recovery after hand surgery entails controlling swelling and discomfort. The following instructions are intended as a guide to help you heal and recover as quickly as possible after your hand surgery.

A. COMFORT:

Although surgery uses only small incision(s) on the hand, swelling and discomfort can be present. To minimize your discomfort, please do the following:

1. **Ice** – Ice controls swelling and discomfort by slowing down the circulation in your hand. Place crushed ice in a cloth covered plastic bag, then wrap the bag with a small towel to protect your skin. Place the ice over your hand for no more than 10 minutes, 3 times a day.
2. **Pain Medication** – If your physician has prescribed a pain medication for you, take it as prescribed, but only as often as necessary. If no pain medication has been prescribed, Extra-Strength Tylenol can be used if you are not allergic or have any medical contraindications. **Avoid alcohol if you are taking pain medication.**
3. **Splint** – A splint may have been applied to your hand to immobilize your wrist to allow for healing. Leave the splint on until your first post-operative visit.

B. ACTIVITIES:

1. **Range-of-Motion** – Move your shoulder/elbow through a full range-of-motion as much as possible to prevent stiffness.
2. **Athletic Activities** – Athletic activities, such as swimming, bicycling, jogging, racquet sports, running and stop-and-go sports, should be **avoided** until allowed by and discussed with your doctor after your first follow-up visit.
3. **Return to Work** – Return to work as soon as possible while limiting pressure on your palm. You should not lift anything heavier than a cup of coffee. Your ability to work depends on a number of factors – your level of discomfort and how much demand your job puts on your elbow and hand. If you have any questions, please call your doctor.
4. **Driving** – Driving is NOT permitted as long as there is significant tenderness and dysfunction in the operative hand.

C. WOUND CARE:

1. Keep the dressing clean and dry until your first post-operative visit.
2. You may shower 1 day after surgery provided the dressing remains dry. Cover the dressing with a plastic bag while showering.
3. Bathing, swimming and soaking should be avoided until allowed by your doctor – Usually 2-3 weeks after your surgery.
4. Healing requires several months and **your** cooperation.

D. EATING:

1. Your first few meals, after surgery, should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids, since some people experience slight nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

E. CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:

1. Pain in your hand persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material presents itself on the dressing or around the incision.
3. You have a temperature elevation greater than 101° with no apparent cause.
4. You have pain, swelling or redness in your arm or hand.
5. You notice new numbness or weakness in your arm or hand.
6. Chest pain or difficulty breathing.

F. RETURN TO THE OFFICE:

1. Your first return to our office should be approximately 1-2 weeks after your surgery. Call Dr. Romanowski's office to make an appointment for this first post-operative visit.