

Andrew J. Pastor, M.D.
Shoulder, Elbow and Sports Medicine

Elbow soft tissue surgery Post Op Instructions

Activity level: You will be in a dressing and/or sling for 2 days post-operatively. The more you are able to allow your body to rest initially, the better and faster your recovery. Sleeping may be difficult the first few days after surgery and comfortable positioning is important. Sleeping in a slightly inclined position with the elbow higher than the heart is usually most comfortable and can be done best with pillows propping up the elbow.

Precautions/activities to avoid- No lifting anything heavier than a coffee cup for two weeks.

Sling- The sling you are in is for comfort and to support the weight of your arm. You will be able to move the elbow in the dressing as much as it allows for the first four days. You may come out of the sling and do pendulum exercises to keep your shoulder supple and flex/extend your elbow and wrist. The sling may be discontinued whenever it isn't helpful. Desktop level activities such as typing are permitted as tolerated.

Dressings- Dressings can be removed after 2 days and then you may get incisions wet in the shower if they are completely sealed over and dry. The Steri-Strips will fall off on their own in 7-10 days. Clean with simple soap and water and pat dry. Do not soak the wounds for the 2 weeks following surgery! You may use lotion on the skin except over the incisions. Do not apply any special ointments or creams to the incision until the skin is completely healed which is typically 3 weeks after surgery.

Home exercises- Rest is most important the first couple of days after surgery. You should be bending and extending your elbow some in the dressing in the first couple of days. After the dressing is removed, you should continue bending and extending the elbow as well as pointing your open hand to the ceiling and floor with the elbow at your side and bent at 90 degrees. Physical therapy may be prescribed when you return for follow up. This will consist of a home exercise program and possibly formal sessions

with a therapist.

Regional nerve blocks- Numbing the nerves to your entire arm can be very helpful for early control of post-operative pain, but are rarely needed with elbow surgery. The nerve block typically lasts 12 to 24 hours and begins to wear off first in the finger tips. Sometimes the block wears off quickly, so when the feeling returns to the fingers, it is a good time to begin taking your pain medication. In many cases, the block will wear off in the night while you are sleeping. Make sure you have taken a long acting pain pill before you go to bed the night of your surgery, even if you are not having any pain.

Pain medication- See pain protocol

Return to work- You may return to work depending upon your job description as early as 3 to 4 days after your surgery. You will need to be off all narcotic pain medication for your brain to function normally. Jobs that have more physical requirements may require longer time away. Driving requires being off all narcotic pain medication.

Report any of the following symptoms immediately: Fever greater than 101° F, calf pain, pain not controlled by pain medications, redness swelling specific to the incision site, excessive bleeding, problems with pain medication, numbness and tingling of the arm that was operated on. You may call our office and speak with a member of our office staff at (425-412-1875).

Follow up- Follow up with Dr. Pastor will be at two weeks following surgery. This appointment should have been pre-arranged prior to surgery.

You will follow up again at 6 and 12 weeks after surgery.

Thank you! I appreciate the opportunity to participate in your care.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, sweeping loop followed by a smaller, more intricate flourish.

Andrew J. Pastor, M.D

based on protocols established by Winston J. Warne, M.D. - Chief of Shoulder surgery
at the University of Washington Medical Center