



At Presbyterian/St. Luke's Medical Center

## **Shoulder Arthroscopy Postoperative Instructions**

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You have just had arthroscopic surgery for your shoulder.

You had:

Even though your incisions (puncture sites) are small and should heal quickly, the structures inside your shoulder may take 6 to 8 weeks to heal and settle down. Your shoulder may be swollen after surgery because fluid has been used to visualize the structures necessary to perform surgery. In the days following surgery, some of the fluid is absorbed by the shoulder and the remainder will leak out of your incisions.

### **Dressing:**

You may remove your dressing on the third postoperative day. If there is drainage, cover the incisions with a gauze dressing held in place by adhesive tape. If the drainage is minimal, the incisions may be covered with Band-Aids until the drainage subsides.

- You will likely have Steri-Strips over your incisions, which are long clear band-aids. These will slough off on their own over the course of a couple weeks. You do not need to remove them.
- If you have sutures on your skin, they will be removed at your first post-op appointment

### **Cold Therapy:**

Use a cold pack, ice pack, gel pack or cold therapy machine for 20 minutes 5-6 times a day. Place a thin cloth between the ice and skin. Cold therapy machines will have further instructions.

### **Showering:**

You may shower on the third postoperative day after removing your dressing, if there is no drainage from the incisions. You may get the incisions wet. If you are unsure that the incisions have stopped draining, then wait until your follow-up visit to shower with your incisions uncovered. Do not soak in water for at least 3 weeks after surgery. Avoid hot tub or pools until 6 weeks after surgery.

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**Sling:**

Your sling will be put on while you are asleep in the operative room. It is ok to adjust the straps for comfort once you get up and move around. You may tighten or loosen the Velcro straps as needed.

**Activity:**

Keep your arm in the sling except for showering and performing pendulum exercises (as described below). Do not lift with the arm on the surgical side. Do not push/pull/lift or carry with the operative arm.

You may only perform pendulum exercises and should avoid much active motion with the operative side. You must wear your sling at all times, with the exception of therapy, showering/getting dressed, using a computer and performing pendulum exercises. **YOU MUST WEAR YOUR SLING FOR SLEEPING -NO EXCEPTIONS!**

**Exercise:**

Pendulum exercises -- bend forward from the waist, supporting your upper body with the good arm. Remove the sling, allowing for the operative arm to hang down. Gently move the arm in circles of about a 5-inch radius. Do this for 5 minutes, 3 times daily. Begin performing pendulum exercises after the nerve block has worn off.



**Physical Therapy:**

I will usually recommend starting formal physical therapy start around 2-3 weeks after surgery. (PLEASE SCHEDULE YOUR THERAPY EARLY AS SPOTS FILL UP)



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**Pain medication:**

An anesthetic is injected into your shoulder at the end of surgery. This usually provides pain relief for several hours postoperatively. You will be given a prescription for pain medication. Take the pain medication as needed. On the first postoperative day, begin taking pain medication prior to going to sleep, even if the nerve block has not worn off. You may also take anti-inflammatory medication (ibuprofen, Aleve, naproxen, Motrin), which results in less swelling and pain after 6 weeks from surgery. You should also take Tylenol 650mg every 6 hours in addition (Tylenol does not interact with the other medications).

**Constipation:**

Constipation is a common side effect of taking pain medication and anesthesia. It is important to prevent constipation.

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water each day
- Walking at least 30 minutes per day
- Eat a diet high in fiber- including whole grain breads, fruits, and vegetables
- Over the counter medications such as Senna and Docusate (following directions on label) will also help.

**Nausea:**

Nausea is common after surgery. You will be given anti-nausea medication during surgery and a prescription for nausea after surgery.

**Sleeping:**

Many patients find it difficult to lie flat for the first 6 to 8 weeks after shoulder surgery. You may want to sleep in a recliner or prop yourself up on several pillows in bed.

If you have had a Rotator Cuff repair, SLAP Repair, or Stabilization surgery, you must wear your sling at night while sleeping for 6 weeks. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

**Driving:**

Do **NOT** drive while taking narcotic pain medication

It is not advised to drive while you are still using a sling (first 6 weeks)



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**Office visits:**

**1st post-op visit:** \_\_\_\_\_

- This is 2 weeks after surgery. You will likely see the PA.

**2nd post-op visit:** \_\_\_\_\_

- This is 6 weeks after surgery. You will see Dr. Sobky.