

# AUSTIN BONE & JOINT CLINIC

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## POSTOPERATIVE ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR INSTRUCTIONS

### IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ.

#### ➤ **Control of swelling**

Use of ice packs frequently on the shoulder for the first week or two postop, then after exercise to control swelling.

#### ➤ **Sling Use**

The sling is to be on at all times except for the following circumstances:

1. Exercise
2. Bathing
3. To change clothes
4. When seated or in bed with the arm supported in the lap. When dressing, put the arm in the shirt sleeve, then put on the sling. The swathe or wrap is optional, except sleep, when it must be used to prevent the arm from slipping out of the sling.

#### ➤ **Wound Care**

Expect some blood-tinged drainage from the incisions. Because of this drainage, frequent dressing changes may be needed over the first few days after surgery. Whenever the dressing becomes moist, apply a new dry dressing using sterile 4x4 gauze sponges (available in pharmacies). Before applying the dressing, clean the site with alcohol, betadine or peroxide. Once the drainage stops, the dressing only needs to be changed every two to three days. **Contact your doctor if you develop any of the following: foul smelling drainage or foul odor from the incision, excessive swelling or redness around the incision, pus or excessive pain.**

#### ➤ **Pain Medication**

A prescription for pain medication has been provided for you. For the first 48 - 72 hours, use the pain medication around the clock. Usually 1 - 2 pills every 4 hours. Even set the alarm in the middle of the night to take a dose. This technique controls post op pain better than waiting for the pain to get out of control before taking any pain medicine. After 48 - 72 hours, begin taking the pain pills on an as needed basis. Do not supplement with anti-inflammatory pills such as ibuprofen, advil, aleve, unless approved by your doctor.

#### ➤ **Itching**

Over the counter Benadryl may be taken, one or two tablets every five hours, as needed for itching.

## **POSTOPERATIVE ROTATOR CUFF REPAIR INSTRUCTIONS (CONT)**

### **➤ Use of the Arm**

You are not to lift the arm away from the side, under the arm's own power. This is to be done only with the pulley, the opposite arm, or if someone lifts the arm for you. However, you can use the arm for light activities with the elbow at the side. Activities such as writing and typing are permitted.

### **➤ Exercises**

Follow the exercise program given to you by your surgeon or the therapists at the hospital. You are not to attempt to lift the arm under its own power. Do the prescribed exercises 2-3 times per day, about 10-20 repetitions for each exercise.

### **➤ Formal Physical Therapy**

This will be initiated some time after the first follow up visit, if your doctor deems it necessary. It is important to do the exercises (physical therapy) given to you in the hospital. Do these exercises 2-3 times per day, 10 repetitions each.

### **➤ Bathing**

Keep the operative site dry when bathing, until the staples are out. The wound can be covered with plastic wrap and secured with waterproof tape when bathing.

### **➤ Sleep**

Sleep can be difficult after shoulder surgery. Patients often find it uncomfortable to sleep lying flat. It may be more comfortable to sleep sitting up or in a recliner. Also try putting a pillow behind the operative elbow so that it does not slide backwards.

### **➤ Warning Signs**

Expect a slight temperature elevation after surgery. For low grade temperature elevation, try walking, coughing, deep breathing and Tylenol. Should your temperature exceed 101.5 degrees, call your doctor. If any signs of infection appear, such as red streaks or pus from the wound, call your doctor.

### **➤ Follow up Appointments**

Call the office (Central 477-6341, Westlake 795-8812), as soon as you get home, or the next business day, to arrange a follow up visit with your doctor 5-10 days after your surgery.

### **➤ How to Contact Your Doctor**

There are never any dumb questions. If you have any concerns, during regular business hours, please call at either office (Central-St. David's 472-9011 or 477-6341; Westlake 795-8812. After regular business hours or on weekends, the doctor "on call" can be contacted through the Medical Exchange at 458-1121.