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## **Arthroscopic Shoulder Rotator Cuff/Labrum Repair Post-Operative Instructions:**

### **GENERAL**

- Wear the sling and shoulder pillow (if it was placed at the time of surgery) at **ALL** times and **avoid** any active motion of your shoulder.
- Be sure to do exercises to move your **elbow, wrist, and fingers** at least 3 times a day starting immediately after surgery.
- Use the cold therapy machine as instructed to decrease pain and swelling.
- If you do not have a cold therapy machine, use ice packs on the surgical site **20 minutes per hour** while awake to decrease pain and swelling.
- It can be helpful to sleep with a pillow under the arm that had surgery for comfort.
- Remember that arthroscopy is performed by pumping in a lot of fluid into the shoulder. Therefore, fluid escaping through the small incisions (“leaking”) is **entirely normal** to occur after surgery.

### **MEDICATIONS**

- Follow Dr. Iyengar’s pain protocol!
- Start taking pain medication when you get home from surgery and then continue to use it **every 4-6 hours** as needed to control the pain.
- It is best to **prevent** post-operative pain by using your medication on a regular basis for the first 24-48 hours after surgery then tapering off.
- Be sure to take a stool softener (docusate or “Colace”) as prescribed to prevent constipation while you are taking narcotics, as this is a **common side effect**.
- If you experience nausea after surgery, use the medication (ondansetron or “Zofran”) as prescribed until it resolves, typically within 48 hours.
- Take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory (“NSAID”) medication, ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) in combination with your narcotic pain medication to reduce inflammation.
- The recommended dose of ibuprofen is 600 mg (3 tablets) by mouth **three** times daily.
- Take ibuprofen **with food** to decrease the risk of stomach irritation.
- Please note, ibuprofen can cause serious GI bleeding so **STOP** taking it if you experience any severe stomach pain or bleeding in your stools and call Dr. Iyengar’s office immediately.

## SHOWER

- You may shower on **post-operative day 3**.
- Be sure to remove the sling and surgical dressings **carefully**.
- Do **not** try to lift the surgical arm over your head.
- Pat dry the incisions after your shower and cover them with Band-Aids.
- Do **not** put any creams, lotions or antibiotic agents on the wounds.
- You may lift your arm **gently** to apply underarm deodorant.
- Put your arm back in the sling gently following your shower.

## POST-OPERATIVE VISIT

- You will have your 1<sup>st</sup> post-operative visit **4 to 7 days after surgery**.
- At the visit, we will change your dressings, inspect your incisions and remove the sutures (stitches) in your shoulder.
- You will be given your post-operative prescription from Dr. Iyengar to start Physical Therapy with all of the guidelines for your therapist to follow.
- We will review your arthroscopic photos to show you what was done at your surgery.
- If you have any questions regarding your surgical recovery, please write them down so that you remember to ask Dr. Iyengar during this appointment

## PHYSICAL THERAPY

- The typical therapy program will be **16-24 weeks**.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> phase of therapy (**6 weeks**) is designed to protect the repair and start to safely regain your range of motion.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of therapy (**6-12 weeks**) will be directed at achieving full range of motion and start working on your strength.
- The final phase of therapy (**12-24 weeks**) involves regaining strength and endurance and is usually supervised by your therapist initially and then completed on your own.
- Dr. Iyengar will talk to you about the specifics of your physical therapy protocol when he sees you at your 1<sup>st</sup> post-operative visit.

## CONTACT OUR OFFICE IF:

- You **do not** already have a post-operative follow-up appointment; please call the appointment desk at **(209) 946-7200** in the first weekday after surgery to schedule.
- Any signs of infection should be reported immediately: **increased swelling, redness, drainage from incisions (usually thick, cloudy pus, not clear liquid secondary to the arthroscopy), warmth, fever (temp > 101.8), chills, or severe pain unrelieved by prescribed medications.**

## WHEN CAN I?

- You may remove the sling on post-operative day 3 for showering **IF** you have someone to assist you to remove and replace the sling.
- Once you start working with a physical therapist, they **may** allow you to remove your sling under their supervision for elbow, wrist and finger exercises and gentle “pendulum” or passive ROM exercises.
- You will be able to resume driving safely when your sling comes off and you are **OFF** narcotic medications (**~4-6 weeks typically**).
- While many people attempt to drive earlier than this, keep in mind that you may be considered **legally impaired** if you attempt to drive while in a sling.
- Most patients require **at least** three days to recover from the effects of surgery and anesthesia.
- Some patients may return to work as soon as **4-7 days** post-operatively and others require extensive time away from work if “limited duty” is not available.
- Keep in mind that it takes **6 MONTHS** to fully recover from a rotator cuff repair even when it is done arthroscopically.