

After Elbow Arthroscopic Surgery

Discharge Instructions

Including:

- Examination of Joint
- Debridement of Joint
- Removal of Loose Bodies
- Removal of Staples or Screws

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General Information

This procedure is done in the operating room under a General Anaesthetic. A lighted telescopic lens called an 'Arthroscope' is used to directly look inside the elbow joint. The procedure is done to examine the joint and do minor surgeries (i.e. cleaning joint surfaces, removing pieces of bone, tissue, screws/staples from previous surgeries). A few puncture wounds are made in the elbow area in order to place the arthroscope and instruments.

The procedure takes between 45 minutes to 1 1/2 hours. You are then taken to the recovery room and after a determined period of time, you are discharged home.

Important Points in Treatment

Bleeding

There may be a small amount of drainage/blood on the bandage. This is usually not a cause for concern.

If the dressing becomes soaked with blood, apply firm steady pressure over the area for 10-15 minutes or until the bleeding stops.

Swelling

Your elbow will be swollen and somewhat uncomfortable for 24-48 hours after your operation. This is normal and partly due to the fact that some fluid is injected into the elbow during the procedure.

Apply covered ice packs over the elbow for 10-20 minutes every 2-3 hours as needed to reduce swelling and pain. (Do not put ice in direct contact with the skin.) A plastic bag with ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas [*do not eat after use as ice pack*] placed in a pillow case or towel works well.

Elevate the elbow and hand 6-12 inches above your heart whenever possible (use pillows for support). If you have swelling in your arm or hand, we recommend elevating the arm on pillows and pumping the hand (opening and closing your hand repeatedly) 3 times a day until the swelling goes away. This is best done when lying flat.

Dressings/Bathing

In 2 days the dressing (white gauze bandage) may be removed. If there is any oozing from the incision, put on a new bandage. When applying a new bandage, do not touch the side that goes against the wound. Bandages can be purchased at any drug store.

You may shower in 3 days if the incision is dry and healing.

Do not remove the steri-strips (tapes) that are over the wound. If they fall off, replace with bandaids until your follow-up appointment.

If the elbow has an elastic tensor bandage, it should be removed for 10-15 minutes and rewrapped twice a day. If the bandage feels too tight, or you feel numbness or tingling in your hand, loosen the bandage. Keep the tensor bandage on until your follow-up appointment.

Using a Sling

You may go home with a sling on your arm. The purpose of the sling is to protect your arm and to take the weight off your elbow. It is supported in the position least stressful to your elbow. It should remain on for the night after surgery. You should begin to wean yourself off the sling the day after surgery.

You should no longer require a sling 5-7 days after you surgery.

If you received a "block"/freezing for pain control and you go home with numbness and no muscle control of your arm, keep your arm protected with the sling until the numbness goes away and you are able to control your arm.

Pain

Take the pain medications as ordered by your surgeon. Covered ice packs may also decrease pain.

Do not drink alcohol when taking pain medication.

Diet

Remember that a well-balanced diet is important for wound healing.

Include high fiber and plenty of fluids in your diet to prevent constipation especially if taking pain medicine.

Do Eat:

- grain breads
- bran cereals (All Bran, Bran Buds, Fruit & Fiber)
- fruits (prunes, raisins, dates, bananas, apples)
- vegetables (broccoli, corn, beans, potatoes)

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about a mild laxative or stool softener, if needed.

Activity/Rest

Recovery after surgery is gradual. It is normal to feel weak and to tire easily during your first week or two after surgery. Alternate your periods of rest and activity.

To improve the movement and circulation to your wrist and hand, we encourage you to move them frequently.

Avoid stressing the elbow joint. Do not carry heavy objects or do heavy physical activities until okayed by your doctor.

Plans for returning to work are dependent on the nature of your job as well as your general health and recovery. Discuss this with your doctor.

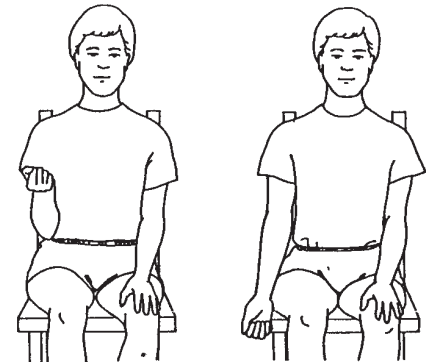
If you are involved in a car accident after surgery and it can be shown that your ability to drive carefully (swerve sharply, check over your shoulder, etc.) was affected by your elbow condition, then your insurance claim might not be valid. Take this into account when you are considering your ability to drive. Consult with your doctor.

Exercising the Elbow

Spend 15 minutes 3 times a day exercising your elbow. Putting ice packs on your elbow before and after your exercises may reduce pain with activity. Sit in a comfortable position with the sling off.

If you have difficulty understanding or doing these exercises, contact the physiotherapist that you will be seeing for your elbow rehabilitation program or contact your surgeon.

1. Bend your elbow to comfort level, hold 5 seconds.
Straighten elbow and hold for 5 seconds.
Repeat 10 times.



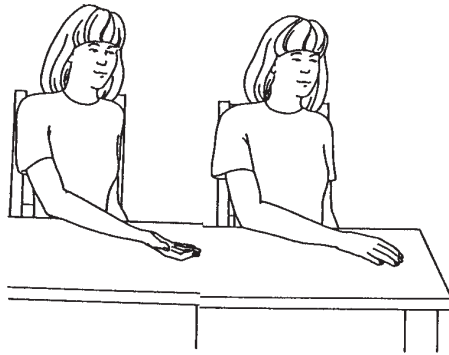
2. Support your arm on a table.

Turn palm up.

Keep elbow at side.

Hold 5 seconds, turn palm down and hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times.



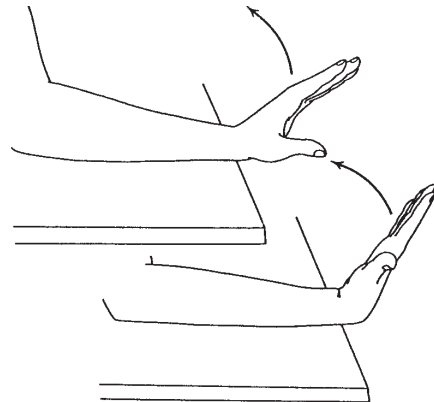
3. Support you arm on a table, hand over edge and palm down.

Raise hand up. Hold 5 seconds.

Turn palm up.

Raise hand up and hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times.



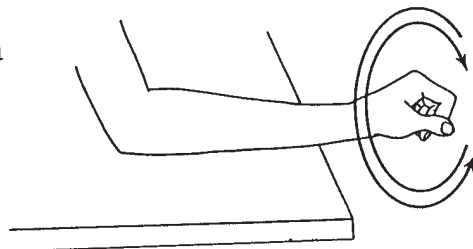
4. Support your arm on a table.

Move your wrist in a circle clockwise.

Repeat 10 times

Move wrist counter clockwise.

Repeat 10 times.



Follow-Up Appointment

Contact your doctor's office to arrange for an appointment. Ensure you keep appointments for follow-up care with your doctor.

Notify the Doctor or go to the Emergency Department if any of the following happens

- persistent bleeding continues even after applying direct pressure to the area for 10-15 minutes
- chills and/or fever of 38.5°C or 101.3°F or higher
- pain not relieved by prescribed medication
- persistent nausea and vomiting
- wound redness, swelling, warm to touch and/or pus-like (yellow/green) drainage
- you notice signs of circulation problems (numbness, coolness, change in skin color, difficulty moving fingers) which is not relieved by loosening the bandage/tensor and/or elevating the arm on pillows while lying flat.
- you are unable to pass urine for more than 8 to 10 hours even though you have been drinking plenty of fluids

Besides these general instructions remember also:

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