



Edward S. Chang, MD
Board Certified Orthopedic Sports Medicine Surgeon

Post-Operative Instructions Following Ulnar Collateral Ligament (UCL) Reconstruction

Inova Orthopaedics and
Sports Medicine

OFFICE LOCATIONS

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CLINICAL NURSE

Eileen Perri, BSN
(703) 797-6918

COMFORT

1. Nerve Block

If you had a nerve block performed **after** surgery, the local anesthetic may keep your shoulder and extremity numb between 6-12 hours. As you regain feeling in the fingertips, it is often best to begin taking the pain medication, to avoid falling behind on the pain.

2. Icing

Place crushed ice in a plastic bag over your shoulder for no more than 20 minutes, 3-4x/day. If you rented an ice machine, please use 20-30 minutes every 1-2 hours as needed (No Compression for the first week). You may undo the sling and place the wrap over shoulder.

Place a thin towel between your skin and ice/wrap to prevent ice burns.

3. Clothing

Button down or zip-up shirts are easier to get on and off after surgery. Avoid wearing any jewelry on the hand of your operative extremity.

MEDICATIONS

1. Pain Medication

You will be prescribed a narcotic pain medication. Please take as prescribed and only as often as necessary. If you had a nerve block performed, it is recommended you start taking medication when you regain sensation in your fingers. Avoid alcohol and driving while on these medications. Please wean from this medication to Tylenol as soon as possible.

2. Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatories (NSAIDs) (Over the Counter)

If you have severe pain, you may take one or two Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) or 1 Naproxen (Aleve) in between dosage of pain medication. Please limit the amount you use.

3. Colace (Over the Counter)

Constipation following surgery is common. You may take a stool softener such as Colace. If constipation lasts more than 3 days, you may take over the counter laxatives such as Milk of Magnesia, Bisacodyl, or Miralax). If symptoms persist, please contact your primary care doctor

4. Antibiotics

Depending on your surgery, an antibiotic may be prescribed. Please begin when you return home on the day of surgery and take as directed until the medication is gone.



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ACTIVITIES

1. Movement

Perform exercises 4 times a day, 15 repetitions each time, starting the day after surgery.

a. Keep your fingers and thumb moving by first making a fist and then stretching your fingers out.



b. Shrug your shoulders while in the sling.

c. A squeeze ball or tennis ball can also help facilitate finger and hand movement.

d. Elbow motion- if you are not in a splint, you may come out of your sling and work on gentle bending and straightening of the elbow. Do it within the limits of your pain.

2. Sling

Please wear the sling for comfort. The splint can be heavy and the sling will help support its weight. Sleeping in the sling may be helpful as well. Placing a pillow under the elbow may help.

3. Weight Bearing Status

Unless directed by Dr. Chang, you should not lift anything on your operative extremity.

4. Physical Therapy

Unless directed by Dr. Chang, PT generally begins **1-2 weeks** after surgery. If you have a splint, PT will begin after your first postoperative appointment, when the splint will be removed.

If you have not already scheduled your physical therapy appointment, please do so as soon as possible. A rehab protocol will be provided to you today and should be given to the therapist at your first session. This paperwork provides specific guidelines from Dr. Chang for the physical therapist to follow during your rehabilitation.

5. Driving

For reconstructive procedures, driving is **NOT** permitted for 6 weeks.

For non-reconstructive procedures, please avoid driving until your 1st post-operative visit.

6. Athletic Activities

Athletics including swimming, cycling, jogging, running and stop and go sports **may not** be resumed until you are cleared by Dr. Chang.



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7. Return to Work/School

Your ability to work depends on a number of factors including your level of discomfort and how demanding your job or school is. If you have any questions or concerns about working, please discuss these issues with Dr. Chang during your first post-op visit.

SPLINT CARE (If applicable)

1. Keep the dressing/splint clean and intact until your first post-operative visit with Dr. Chang.
2. You may shower 2-3 days after surgery. Place your arm in a clean plastic bag or a cast bag. Securely tape the open end of the bag to your arm. This will help keep the splint as dry as possible.
3. If you are not in a splint, you may also begin to shower 2-3 days after surgery. Please keep the elbow dry. You may use water proof band-aids or place your arm in a clean plastic bag or cast bag, with the open end securely taped.
4. Baths/Soaking/Swimming should be avoided for 2 months following surgery.

EATING

Your first few meals after surgery should include light, easily digestible foods and plenty of liquids as some people experience nausea as a temporary reaction to anesthesia.

CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:

1. Pain in the back of your ankle persists or worsens in the first few days after surgery.
2. Excessive redness or drainage of cloudy or bloody material from the wounds (clear red tinted fluid and some mild drainage should be expected). New drainage of any kind 5 days after surgery should be reported.
3. You have a temperature greater than 101 F.
4. You have pain, swelling or redness in your calf.
5. You have numbness or weakness in your fingers more than 2-3 days after surgery.
6. You have any foul-smelling drainage from the dressing/splint.

Business Hours: Please call our clinical nurse (703) 797-6918.

After hours: You may call (703) 797-6980 during non-business hours to reach the answering service. Problems requiring immediate attention are then forwarded to the medical staff.

RETURN TO THE OFFICE

You may return to see Dr. Chang 7-10 days after your surgery. If you have not made your postoperative appointment already, please call (703) 797-6980. Please confirm the office location as Dr. Chang sees patients in multiple locations.