



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

## Post-Operative Instructions Following Arthroscopic Rotator Cuff Repair

Inova Orthopaedics and  
Sports Medicine

### OFFICE LOCATIONS

8100 Innovation Park  
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Fairfax, VA 22031  
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1005 N. Glebe Rd  
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6355 Walker Lane  
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Alexandria, VA 22310  
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### CLINICAL NURSE

Eileen Perri, BSN  
(703) 797-6918

### COMFORT

#### **1. Nerve Block**

If you had a nerve block performed, 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.

### 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.

#### **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.

#### **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**

Pump your hands and move your wrist and elbow to keep the blood flowing and prevent stiffness. You may also purchase a stress ball or tennis ball to squeeze.

a. Reconstructive Procedure (Rotator Cuff Repair, Labral Repair, Biceps Tenodesis, Fracture Repair)  
Your arm will be in a sling for 4-6 weeks. You may remove the sling to shower and dress, however the arm must be kept gently by the side and do NOT use it actively. You shoulder wear your sling at ALL TIMES. Do not move your arm out to the side.

You may remove your sling to bend the elbow 10-12 repetitions, 3-4 times/day.  
You may remove the sling to type at a computer.

### **2. Sling**

Please wear the sling in public. For reconstructive procedures, you should sleep with the sling for 4 weeks. Most patients find that lying down causes more discomfort. You may sleep better in a recliner or propped up in bed. A pillow placed behind your 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 **2-3 weeks** after surgery. 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **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.



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### **WOUND CARE**

1. Keep the dressing clean and dry after surgery. You may remove the dressing 3 days after surgery. The Steri-Strips (small white tape that is directly on the incision areas) should be **left on** until the first office visit.
2. You may apply waterproof Band Aids (you can pick this up at CVS) over the incision sites. This should be changed daily.
3. You may shower 2-3 days after surgery. You must keep the incision **DRY**. Generally covering the incision with waterproof Band Aids works well.

To clean you underarm, please take your other hand to gently move the arm away so you can reach your underarm. Leaning forward can sometimes make this easier.

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.