



## Post-Op Instructions for AC Joint Reconstruction

### DIET

- Begin with clear liquids and light foods (jellos, soups, etc.)
- Progress to your normal diet if you are not nauseated

### WOUND CARE

- Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the hand occurs
- It is normal for the shoulder to bleed and swell following surgery. If blood soaks through the bandage, do not become alarmed, reinforce with additional dressing
- Remove surgical dressing on the **third post-operative day** – if minimal drainage is present, apply band-aids or a clean dressing over incisions and change daily
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a plastic covering over the surgical site beginning the day after surgery.
- You can get your wound site wet in the shower on the **3rd post-operative day**.
- NO immersion in a bath until given approval by our office.

### MEDICATIONS

- Local anesthetics are injected into the wound and shoulder joint at the time of surgery. This will wear off within 8-12 hours and it is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery when swelling peaks.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease the side effects take the medication with food. If constipation occurs, consider taking an over the counter laxative.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medications changed.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication or while in sling
- If your provider discussed taking a blood thinner like aspirin after surgery please take it as directed. Please contact the office should severe distal arm pain occur or significant swelling of the distal arm and/or hand occur.

### ACTIVITY

- Ok to remove sling for hygiene, dressing, and home exercise 3x daily to begin on first postoperative day
- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (ie: reclining chair) and a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort while **STILL IN SLING**
- Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling. Unless otherwise instructed the arm should remain in the sling at all times.
- Avoid long periods of sitting or long distance traveling for 2 weeks.
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician, it is illegal to drive in a sling
- May return to sedentary work **ONLY** or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

### IMMOBILIZER (if prescribed)

- Your sling with supporting pillow should be worn at all times (except for hygiene and exercises).
- Keep your elbow against the pillow and in front of your body at all times to minimize stress on the repair.



- Keep a pillow behind the elbow when lying down to prevent the elbow from sliding backwards.

### ICE THERAPY

- Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery.
- Begin immediately after surgery - use the ice machine (when prescribed) as directed for the first 2-3 days following surgery. Ice at your discretion thereafter. When using "real" ice, avoid direct skin contact > 20 mins to prevent damage / frostbite of skin. In either case, check the skin frequently for excessive redness, blistering or other signs of frostbite.
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if machine not prescribed) for 45 minutes every 2 hours daily until your first post-operative visit. Care should be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin.

### EXERCISE

- Avoid movement of the arm against gravity or away from the body.
- Begin exercises 3x daily starting the day after surgery (wrist flexion/extension, elbow flexion/extension, shoulder range of motion, pendulum swings) unless otherwise instructed. See attached pictures of exercises for reference. Three sets of 10-15 repetitions each is advised. If the exercises cause pain, stop and try again later in the day.
- Shoulder stiffness and discomfort is normal for a few days following surgery.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin after your first post-operative visit if necessary.
- It generally begins several days after your surgery date unless your provider has stated otherwise. If you are unsure of this please call the office at **504-897-6351** to receive instructions for starting therapy.

### EMERGENCIES\*\*

- Contact our office M-F 8:00AM – 5:00PM at **504-897-6351**
- Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever (over 101° – it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
- Redness around incisions
- Color change in distal arm and/or hand
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Calf pain
- If you have an emergency **after office hours** or on the weekend, contact **504-897-6351** and ask for Dr. Cancienne's provider on call.
- If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.

### FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact our office at **504-897-6351** to schedule.
- Typically the first post-operative appointment following surgery is 10-14 days following surgery
- If you have any further questions please contact us during office hours

## **POST OPERATIVE SHOULDER EXERCISES**

### **WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION**



Actively bend wrist forward.  
Then backwards as far as you can.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.

### **ELBOW FLEXION / EXTENSION**



With palm either UP, DOWN, or THUMBSIDE UP  
gently bend elbow as far as possible.  
Hold for 5 seconds.

Then straighten arm as far as possible.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.  
**\*\*DO NOT PERFORM THIS EXERCISE IF  
BICEP TENODESIS WAS PERFORMED\*\***