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Shoulder Surgery – Postoperative Instructions

- **Dressing:** After surgery, the wound is covered with gauze and ace wraps. These should be left in place for **3 days**. It can be normal to see some bloody drainage on the dressings. If bright red blood soaks through the dressings, please call Dr. Frank's office. After 3 days, the dressing can be removed and wounds covered with dry gauze or waterproof Band-Aids. **Do not remove the paper tapes/strips or cut any of the visible sutures.** You can reapply the ace wrap to control swelling.
- **Showering:** Unless otherwise instructed, you may shower 2 days after surgery, but you must keep the dressings/wounds dry. **Do not soak the operative shoulder (no baths, hot-tubs, or pools)** until allowed by Dr. Frank to avoid risk of infection.
- **Ice Therapy:** Icing is very important for the first 5-7 postoperative days to decrease swelling and pain. While the post-op dressing is in place, icing can be continuous. Once the dressing is removed on the third operative day, ice can be applied for 15-20 minute periods, 3-4 times per day. Care must be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin.
- **Sleep:** Sleeping can be uncomfortable for the first 1-2 weeks after shoulder surgery. It can be helpful to sleep in a recliner-chair or in a semi-upright position.
- **Activity:** Unless otherwise instructed, you should begin the pendulum and gentle passive range-of-motion exercises as demonstrated on the exercise handout on the first day after surgery. You may use your arm to assist with eating and personal hygiene unless specifically instructed not to by Dr. Frank. You may **not bear-weight** or lift anything heavier than a cell phone or cup of coffee with your operative arm. Be sure to use and move your hand, wrist, and elbow in order to decrease swelling in your arm. While exercise is important, don't over-do it. Common sense is the rule.
- **Sling/Immobilizer:** Unless otherwise instructed, you should wear your postoperative sling/immobilizer at all times, including while sleeping. The sling can be taken off for showering; however, care must be taken to protect the shoulder at all times.

- **Medications:**

- **Pain Control:** For most patients, a nerve block is provided by the anesthesia team before surgery to help with postoperative pain control – while every patient is different, this will typically wear off within 12-24 hours. Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication (i.e. vicodin, norco, percocet, or other codeine-derivative) for 1-2 days after surgery – please take as instructed. It is important not to drink alcohol or drive while taking narcotic medication. If your pain is minimal, you may discontinue the use of narcotics. Ibuprofen 200-400 mg (i.e. Advil) can be taken as needed in between doses of narcotic pain medication for additional pain control.
- **Constipation:** The use of narcotics can lead to constipation. Adequate hydration and over-the-counter stool softeners can minimize constipation problems.
- **Normal medications:** Resume the day after surgery unless otherwise instructed.
- **Diet:** The anesthetic drugs used during your surgery may cause nausea for the first 24 hours. Following surgery, begin with clear liquids and light foods. You can progress to your normal diet if not nauseated. If nausea and vomiting become severe, or if you show signs of dehydration (lack of urination), please call Dr. Frank’s office.
- **Post-Operative Appointment:** Dr. Frank will need to reexamine you 7-10 days after shoulder surgery. Please call the office (numbers on first page) to schedule a follow-up appointment.
- **Driving:** No driving until permitted by Dr. Frank.
- **Work/School:** May return to sedentary work or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable.
- **Phone Numbers and Other Helpful Information:**
 - A low-grade fever (up to 100.5 degrees) is not uncommon in the first 48 hours. Please call Dr. Frank’s office with any temperature over 101 degrees.
 - Please call Dr. Frank’s office if you have severe pain that your pain medication does not relieve, persistent numbness of the arm/hand, fever over 101 degrees, redness/warmth around the incisions, persistent drainage/bleeding from the incision(s), difficulty breathing, chest pain, excessive nausea/vomiting, or if you experience redness or swelling in your thigh or calf.
 - If unexpected problems occur and you need to speak to someone, please call the doctor. If calling after office hours or on the weekend, you may reach the resident or fellow on call. The resident or fellow on call may not be on Dr. Frank’s service and may not be familiar with your case, but will be able to direct any questions/concerns directly to Dr. Frank.
 - a. If you had surgery at Lone Tree, AOP, or Broomfield, call 720-848-8200
 - b. If you had surgery in Boulder, call 303-315-9900
 - If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.