

## **ARTHROSCOPIC ELBOW DEBRIDEMENT POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**

### **1. DIET**

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

### **2. WOUND CARE**

- Maintain your operative dressing, loosen bandage if swelling of the wrist or hand occurs
- It is normal for the elbow to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks onto the bandage, do not become alarmed – reinforce with additional dressing
- Remove surgical dressing on the **2nd** post-operative day – if minimal drainage is present, apply Band-Aids over incisions and change daily
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower starting the day after surgery if you seal the surgical site with plastic around the ACE
- Once surgical dressing has been removed (2nd day) you may place waterproof Band-Aids over incisions to shower, change bandages daily. Do not scrub the area and pat to dry. **NO** immersion of operative arm (i.e. bath)

### **3. MEDICATIONS**

- Pain medication is injected into the wound and elbow joint during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours
- 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 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 medication changed (831-648-7200 – ask for Dr. Howard's medical assistant)
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication
- Ibuprofen 400-600mg (i.e. Advil) may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative 'peaks and valleys', reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage
- Do **NOT** take additional Tylenol (Acetaminophen) if taking Norco

### **4. ACTIVITY**

- Elevate the operative arm to chest level whenever possible to decrease swelling

- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (i.e. reclining chair) and a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort
- Do not engage in activities which increase pain/swelling (lifting or any repetitive wrist/elbow/shoulder movements) over the first 7-10 days following surgery
- Avoid long periods of sitting (without arm elevated) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician
- May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable
- Formal physical therapy typically begins 7-10 days postoperatively. Please call your physical therapy location of choice (within 2-3 days after surgery) to schedule appointments.

## 5. IMMOBILIZER

- Your sling should be worn for comfort and removed for exercise and hygiene
- You may remove for gentle range of motion of your shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand

## 6. ICE THERAPY

- Begin immediately after surgery
- Use icing machine continuously or ice packs (if machine not prescribed) every 2 hours for 20 minutes daily until your first post-operative visit – remember to keep arm elevated to level of chest while icing

## 7. EXERCISE

- Gentle shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand range of motion exercises can be performed beginning on the first post-operative day
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin about 7-10 days post-operatively. Please contact your physical therapy location of choice 2-3 days after surgery to schedule appointments.

## 8. EMERGENCIES

- Contact Dr. Howard or his staff at 831-648-7200 if any of the following are present:
  - Painful swelling or numbness
  - 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 wrist or hand
  - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
  - Difficulty breathing

- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- \*\*If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the same office number (831-648-7200 and you will be connected to our page service)
- \*\*If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.

## **9. FOLLOW UP CARE + QUESTIONS**

- Typically the first post-operative appointment following surgery is 10-14 days following surgery
- If you do not already have a postoperative appointment scheduled, please contact the office during normal office hours (831-648-7200) and ask for appointment scheduling.
- The first post-operative appointment will be with Dr. Howard where he will assess the wound, go over post-operative protocol, and answer any questions you may have regarding the procedure