

Distal Radius Open Reduction Internal Fixation Post-Op 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 and splint until first post-operative visit
- It is normal for the shoulder to wrist and swell following surgery
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a large garbage bag over your splint starting the day after surgery – NO immersion of operative arm (i.e. bath)
 - **You must keep your splint DRY. If it gets wet please contact Dr. Howard's office**

3. MEDICATIONS

- Pain medication is injected into the wound and shoulder 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
 - Primary Medication = Oxycodone
 - Take 1 – 2 tablets every 4 – 6 hours as needed
 - Max of 12 pills per day
 - Plan on using it for 2 to 5 days, depending on level of pain
- 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
- 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.

4. ACTIVITY

- 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 above shoulder level activities) over the first 7-10 days following surgery
- Avoid long periods of sitting (without arm supported) 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

5. SPLINT/CAST

- Your post-op splint should be worn at all times
- Splint/cast is worn for approximately 2-4 weeks after which you will be transitioned to a Velcro wrist brace
 - **You must keep your splint /cast DRY. If the splint gets wet please contact Dr. Howard's office.**

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 supported while icing

7. EXERCISE

- No exercises or wrist motion until after your first post-operative visit unless otherwise instructed
- If needed, formal occupational therapy (PT) will begin after your first post-operative visit

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

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- 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