

## **UCL/MCL Reconstruction Post-Operative 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 elbow, wrist, or hand occurs
- It is normal for the shoulder to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks onto the bandage, do not become alarmed – reinforce with additional dressing
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a large garbage bag over your sling starting the day after surgery – NO immersion of operative arm (i.e. bath)

### **3. MEDICATIONS**

- Pain medication is injected into the wound 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
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication
- Ibuprofen 200-400mg (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. IMMOBILIZER**

- Your immobilizer should be worn at all times except for hygiene and exercise

## **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**

- No elbow exercises or motion until after your first post-operative visit
- You may remove your sling for range of motion exercises of your shoulder, wrist, and hand
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin about 10 days post-operatively with a prescription provided at 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
- 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