



Post-operative Instructions for Shoulder Arthroscopy with Rotator Cuff Repair

Dr. Jeffrey J. Mair, DO

PAIN:

- You will be sent home from the surgery center with prescriptions for pain medication.
- After the first day or two, as the pain lessens, you may decrease the frequency with which you take the medication.
- Remember, the medications are not necessarily meant to completely eliminate your pain, only to make it more bearable.
- It is also helpful to use ice to decrease pain and swelling.
- If these measures are not adequately controlling your pain, please call our office.
- If it is after hours, you will speak to the physician on call.
- Narcotic pain medications can cause constipation; you may wish to use an over-the-counter stool softener to help prevent this.

DRESSINGS:

- You will have a soft dressing applied over your incisions.
- It is meant to absorb any leaking blood or fluid from the joint, and to protect from infection.
- Leakage immediately after surgery is normal and actually helps to drain some of the fluid that accumulates in the joint during surgery.
- The dressings may become moist or blood-stained; this is normal and usually not a cause for alarm.

BATHING:

- You may remove your dressing 48 hours after your surgery to take a shower.
- You may let soap and water gently wash over your incisions, but do not scrub them.
- Pat them dry with a towel, then recover each of the incisions with a band-aid.
- You may not soak in a bathtub or go swimming until your sutures have been removed and your incisions are well healed.

- You should remove your sling/immobilizer to shower, but if you had a repair, you must keep your arm at your side.

SLEEPING:

- It may be helpful to sleep in a recliner initially after your surgery.
- This position is often more comfortable at first, helps to “elevate” the shoulder, and will help prevent you from moving around too much while you are sleeping.
- You may transition to a bed as soon as it is comfortable to lie in a more flat position.
- You may need to use pillows to prop yourself up slightly as you are making this transition.
- It may be anywhere from a few days to a week or two before you are able to sleep comfortably in a bed.

DRIVING:

- You may not drive while you are taking pain medications.
- Once you have discontinued the pain medications, your doctor will let you know when it is safe to drive depending on your specific procedure.

AFTER SURGERY:

- Your arm should remain in the shoulder sling/immobilizer at all times; although you may remove it to shower, and a few times a day to bend and straighten your elbow and wrist as long as your arm stays at your side.

10-14 DAYS POST-OP:

- You will have your first office visit.
- If you have non-absorbable sutures, they will be removed at this visit.
- You will review surgical pictures and be given the opportunity to ask questions.
- You may be taught gentle pendulum exercises to help decrease the development of stiffness, which you should do 2-3 times daily.
- Continue wearing the sling/immobilizer the remainder of the time.

4-6 WEEKS POST-OP:

- At this time, you will begin physical therapy to help improve your range of motion.
- Once therapy starts, you will be allowed to discontinue the sling/immobilizer and begin moving the arm on your own.
- It will be stiff and sore and fatigue easily, so you may need to wean out of it slowly over a few days.
- You still should not lift anything heavier than a glass of water or plate of food.

8-12 WEEKS POST-OP:

- You will have follow-up office visits every 4-6 weeks until fully healed.
- You may continue to use your arm for daily activities, but should not lift more than a few pounds.
- Strengthening begins with light weights and increases slowly with the help of your physical therapist.

3-4 MONTHS POST-OP:

- You will likely finish physical therapy, but should continue with your home exercises to improve range of motion, strength, and function.

6 MONTHS POST-OP:

- If things have progressed as expected, you will likely be able to resume most activities as tolerated.
- Be aware that, for some people, it may actually be a year or more after surgery before you have full motion and strength.
- Many patients will have a final office visit between six months and one year post-op, depending on your recovery progress and the size of your tear.