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Rotator Cuff Repair

ROTATOR CUFF AFTER CARE

Prior to the surgery, we want you to wash your arm and armpit with a special antibacterial soap called Hibiclense. You will be given more specific instructions separately regarding exactly how to wash but you can start using the Hibiclense in your normal showers 3-5 days before the surgery with more extensive washing instructions the night before and the morning of surgery. You will shower the night before and the morning of surgery and put on freshly laundered clothes and avoid any lotions, creams or deodorant to your arm after your morning shower.

Surgeries are scheduled as an outpatient procedure so you will go home the same day. You will need to be at the surgery center about 90 minutes prior to your scheduled surgery time. The surgery usually lasts about 2 hours and you are usually in the recovery room for about 2 hours. Prior to the surgery, the anesthesiologist will talk to you about numbing your arm with a nerve block. This block lasts for 12-24 hours after the surgery. With the block you will still go to sleep for the surgery but you require less medication to keep you asleep so you wake up faster and feel less of the affects from the anesthesia. You will talk to the anesthesiologist to decide if this is the right choice for you. You will be given pain medication to take following the surgery. We recommend you take your pain medication even though your arm is numb. The pain medication and the nerve block work differently so if you have not taken any pain medication prior to the block wearing off you will be behind on your pain and have difficulty with pain control. The pain medication given at the time of surgery is usually a narcotic (Norco or oxycodone) and Vistaril (hydroxyzine- a medication that helps the pain medication work better). You can also take Tylenol (if your narcotic does not already include it -it will say APAP on the bottle) as well as ibuprofen as needed for pain. We recommend taking your medications staggered so you don't get behind on your pain. If you feel you are starting to have issues with your pain, please call the office and we will walk through a dosing schedule. Just remember the first day or two are the most painful. The pain medication will not take all your pain away but is taken to make it more manageable. All narcotic pain medications require a written prescription so you have to come into the office to pick one up. We recommend giving us a 3 day notice for refills.

You will leave the surgery center with a big, bulky dressing on your shoulder. Leave this on for at least 24 hours after surgery. After 24 hours, you can remove the dressing but leave the small pieces of tape on your skin. You can shower as normal and not cover your shoulder. Let the water run over your shoulder and pat it dry.



Following your rotator cuff repair, you will go home with your arm in a special sling with a side pillow and waist strap. This sling is designed to keep your shoulder in the safest and most neutral position to allow the rotator cuff to heal. We will usually fit you for the sling in the office prior to surgery or immediately after the operation to ensure a proper fit. The sling should stay on full time except for hygiene and when sitting around (reading a book, watching TV, etc). You should stay in your sling while you are up and about and while sleeping. When you do come out of the sling we want you to bend and straighten your elbow and move your wrist around. You can bend forward at the waist and let your arm hang away from your body. You do not need to move it in circles when you are in this position. It is good to do this in the shower so you can wash in your armpit as well as put deodorant on. You will be in your sling for about 6 weeks following your surgery. Your restrictions at this point are no lifting more than a glass of water or a telephone but you may type or use a computer.

At your 6 week appointment following surgery, we will allow you to wean from your sling and write an order for you to begin physical therapy. If you know where you would like to see the therapist (TCO, IAM, etc.) , you can schedule your first therapy appointment for shortly after your 6 week post op appointment. The therapy will involve the use of a pulley or a stick to assist you in getting your arm up to and to and above the level of your shoulder with assistance. We will increase your lifting restrictions to lifting up to 2 pounds with your arm but no overhead work. We will see you back in 6 weeks.

Your next follow up visit will be at 3 months from your surgery date. At this point you will have been seeing the physical therapist and will have been working on your motion for the past 6 weeks. Many patients will have near normal motion at this time but some will slightly stiff and will still be working on regaining their motion with their therapist. If their motion is significantly limited, we may discuss the possibility of an intra-articular injection at some point should they continue to be stiff despite therapy. Your therapy will now progress to begin strengthening exercises. You will start with little to no weight and increase to 1-2 pounds as tolerated over the next several months. Therapy should not cause increased pain. You should feel like your shoulder is tired or fatigued from a good workout but you should never have significantly increased pain. Your lifting restrictions at this time will be 10 pounds to the waist, 5 pounds to the shoulder and 2 pounds occasionally overhead.

We will see you next at 4 ½ months after surgery. You will continue to be working on strengthening and motion with therapy. If your therapist feels you are able to, you will be discharged from therapy and will be working on your rotator cuff strengthening exercises on your own at home, 3-4 times per week. We don't want you to do your strengthening daily as your muscles need time to recover from the strengthening exercises. Your lifting restrictions will be 25 pounds to the waist, 10 pounds to the shoulder and 5 pounds overhead.

At your 6 month visit we will release you from all restrictions. You will be encouraged to continue with your rotator cuff strengthening exercises indefinitely. If you are under work comp insurance, we likely will put you at MMI (Maximum Medical Improvement) which is the point at which you will not notice significant improvement following your surgery. This is not to say you will not get any better following your surgery but you are almost as good as you are going get following your surgery. Some patients are not yet ready to be released and we will treat them on an individual, case by case basis. Your next follow up visit will be one year from your surgery.



Timeline for Rotator Cuff Repair:

***Surgery is scheduled-** You should now schedule your pre op history and physical with your medical doctor, buy the Hibiclense soap and review the washing instructions, arrange for a ride home and any help you will need post operatively, begin to think about clothes which are easy to get in and out of (button up shirts, loose pull over tops, etc), and practice getting in and out of your sling. If you have any need for disability or FMLA paperwork to be filled out, you can get that to Kaici prior to your surgery. Please do not give it to Dr. Kelly or Lindsey the day of surgery.

***After your first post op appointment-** You will be instructed to follow up 4-6 weeks after your post op appointment. When you make that appointment, you should also make an appointment to begin therapy about 2-3 days following your 6 week office visit. If you need suggestions on where to go for therapy, please ask. If you need an order faxed over, Kaici can do that for you but we will give you an order at that visit. We suggest you make the therapy appointment then so you don't have a delay in starting your therapy. If you need work restrictions, you will be allowed to return with no use of your operative arm x 6 weeks.

*** After the 6 week office visit appointment-** You will leave the 6 week appointment with an order for therapy and you may begin to wean from your sling. Therapy will continue for several weeks to months, depending on how you are progressing. Your work restrictions will be updated to lifting up to 5 pounds and no overhead use with your operative arm. We will see you back 3 months from surgery.

***After the 3 month office visit appointment-** You will be given an order to begin gentle strengthening at your office visit 3 months after surgery. We want therapy to feel like you are working your arm but we don't want you to have pain during, immediately after or the next day. If you do, be sure to tell your therapist and have your exercises adjusted. Your work restrictions will be that you may lift 10 pounds to the waist, 5 pounds to the shoulder and 2 pounds occasionally overhead. We will see you back again in another 6 weeks.

***After the 4 ½ month office visit-** If you have not yet been discharged to a home exercise program from therapy, you may need additional visits and these can be written today. Dr. Kelly or Lindsey will assess your progress with therapy and make any needed adjustments. Your work restrictions will be that you may lift 25 pounds to the waist, 10 pounds to the shoulder and 5 pounds overhead. We will see you back at the 6 month point from surgery, in another 6 weeks.

***After the 6 month visit-** Many patients at the 6 month visit have been discharged from therapy and are doing the exercises on their own. It is important to continue to do these 3-4 times per week indefinitely. If your shoulder is part of a work comp claim, we will discuss MMI and PPD at this time. We likely will release you to work without restrictions and see you back one year from surgery.