



## Rotator Cuff Repair

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### ACTIVITY:

Sleeping may be difficult for a few weeks after surgery. Avoid sleeping on the operative side. You may be more comfortable sleeping in a reclining chair, or propped up with pillows in bed. At night, place a pillow behind your operative arm to keep the arm in front of your body.

To shower, have someone help you remove the immobilizer. Keep your arm at your side as if you're holding a newspaper between your arm and side. It is ok to straighten your elbow as this does not move your shoulder. To clean your armpit, lean forward bending at the waist. As you do this, your arm will fall away from your side enough to allow you to wash. Doing it this way allows you to wash your armpit without using any of the muscles that were repaired during your surgery. Have someone help you get dressed then re-apply the immobilizer over your clothes.

Don't drive until we have seen you for your post-op appointment, as it might be difficult to control the vehicle. You will also need to be off any narcotic medication before driving.

### PAIN CONTROL:

You likely received a peripheral nerve block for this procedure. You usually will be unable to feel or move your shoulder/arm for between 6-12 hours post operatively. Make sure you start taking your oral pain medications **BEFORE** you are able to start feeling your shoulder/arm and continue to take your pain medication as scheduled for the first 48 hours to keep ahead of the post operative pain.

Once you get home, put ice on the shoulder for at least 20 minutes on then 20 minutes off. ***NEVER put ice directly on the skin as this may cause frostbite.*** Use the ice pretty regularly for the first 2 weeks and then only as needed. The first day or so after surgery, take the pain medicine pretty regularly. Don't wait until the pain is real bad as this makes pain more difficult to control.

### DRESSING MANAGEMENT:

1. A sterile operative dressing has been applied to your shoulder. If possible, do not alter or change it for the first 48 hours following surgery. If it comes loose or is soiled, then it may be changed with new gauze and tape.
2. The shoulder is filled with water to perform your surgery. It is normal for the shoulder to drain/ooze water for the first day or so. This is usually a blood tinged color so don't be alarmed.
3. You may shower 48 hours after surgery if there is no drainage from your incisions. Take care to limit the movement of your arm as you remove your dressings. After the shower pat the shoulder dry and place new gauze and tape over your incisions.
4. Do not soak the shoulder in bathtub, hot tub, or pool until you are told it is ok.
5. Do not remove steri-strips or sutures as these will be removed at your first post op visit.

## PHYSICAL THERAPY:

Although your rotator cuff has been repaired, it is at risk of re-tearing until it is fully healed. It is most vulnerable during the first 6 weeks after surgery. We will give you instructions on your limitations and restrictions at your post op visits. For now, we want very little shoulder motion. It is important, however, that you gently move your elbow, hand and wrist to reduce swelling and prevent stiffness. \*Absolutely no pushing, pulling, or lifting with your operative arm. Nothing heavier than a coffee cup should be held in your operative arm.

You may remove the immobilizer to shower, but it should be worn **full time otherwise**.

Any concerns after surgery should be directed to our office M-Th 7:30-5:00, F 7:30-4:30. Evenings and weekend we have an on-call physician at 651-439-8807 and Orthopedic Urgent Care located at:

High Pointe Health Campus  
8650 Hudson Blvd.,  
Suite 100 Lake Elmo, MN 55042

Any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office.

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