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Orthopedic Specialists  
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## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: OUTPATIENT SHOULDER REPLACEMENT

### MEDICATION

- Pain management is important not only for your comfort and satisfaction after your shoulder replacement but to ensure you can safely discharge from the ambulatory surgical center. Pain control is also important for participation in early exercises which can improve your surgical outcome. Dr. Obermeyer uses a multimodal approach to your pain to safely limit your exposure to toxic narcotic pain medications.
  - Most patients will be given prescriptions for two pain medications: norco (hydrocodone) which is a narcotic pain reliever and celebrex (celecoxib) which is an anti-inflammatory. Take the medications as directed to control pain.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness and constipation. We will also provide a prescription stool softener (Senna-S) to take while you are on norco to prevent constipation.
- You may not drive while taking narcotic pain medicine. It is recommended to refrain from driving for several weeks surgery to protect from re-injury and to avoid liability to you in the event of an accident.
- Blood clots are possible after any surgery, including shoulder replacement. We recommend you take an 81mg twice daily starting the day after surgery for one month to prevent blood clots. This can typically be taken with other medications, unless instructed otherwise.
- Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.
- Call the office immediately if you are having an adverse reaction to any medication.

### WOUND CARE

- It is recommended you keep the surgical bandages clean and dry for five days following surgery. This is important to prevent infection and ensure proper wound healing. You may remove the bandages on your own in five days, leaving the white stickers ("steri-strips") on the incision. When the bandages come off, you may begin showering, leaving the arm dangle at the side out of the sling.
- You can remove the sling to shower and when doing so, lean forward to access your armpit. We recommend avoiding submerging the incision in a pool or bath until 2-3 weeks following surgery.
- No sutures need to be removed. Once the bandage is removed at 5 days, you can leave the stickers over the incision (steri-strips) in place, which continue to protect the incision, and fall off on their own.
- It is normal for some mild swelling and bruising in the arm and chest to persist after surgery. We recommend exercising the wrist and fingers to improve swelling.



## ACTIVITY

- Do not attempt to use your own muscles to position the hand out in front of you or to move your elbow away from your side until instructed. You may perform simple tasks with the hand in the sling, such as washing your hands, feeding yourself, and working on a phone or computer. Try to limit this, as the first few weeks are dedicated to healing.
- We recommend you avoid **driving** while wearing the sling or while taking narcotic pain medications. Dr. Obermeyer will discuss with you specific recommendations on driving depending on your type of surgery.
- The involved arm may be taken out of the sling three times a day to bend and straighten your elbow and let the arm dangle in front of the body (called “pendulums”) unless otherwise instructed. This can be performed when getting dressed and when showering.
- You may move the hand and wrist within the sling as tolerated. It is recommended you also exercise the fingers, by maximally straightening and bending to make a fist a few times a day. This helps with swelling.
- Dr. Obermeyer will discuss with you the plan for formal physical therapy (PT) before surgery, when you are called for a checkup, or during your first post-operative visit. We recommend you coordinate appointments with our therapy department.
- It is recommended you stay local for the first two weeks until your first postoperative appointment. If you travel thereafter, that is fine, and we recommend you take breaks of sitting by standing and walking to help with discomfort.

## WORK

- Most patients can return to desk work one week after surgery, as long as pain is tolerable. If you require further workplace accommodations, please contact Dr. Obermeyer’s team to ensure your employer has appropriate documentation and any required paperwork.

## SLEEP

- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (i.e. recliner with the head up) and a pillow under the elbow for support may provide better comfort for the first few weeks. When comfortable, you can lay flat on your back as tolerated (or in any other position of comfort) as long as the sling is worn.
- Sleep in your sling until instructed otherwise.

## SLING

- Remain in the sling at all times unless told otherwise, except when dressing, showering or exercising.
- Dr. Obermeyer and his team will instruct you on how many weeks the sling is used. Complying is important to ensure proper healing of the tissues. Once you are outside the window of sling use, you may continue to use it intermittently when in crowds or during travel as needed if you like.



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- To remove the sling, unfasten the neck strap, unfasten the waist strap, and slide the arm out while allowing the elbow to straighten. Reverse the process to replace the sling. Keep the arm by the side. If the sling is correctly positioned, the forearm is parallel to the floor and the hand is near or slightly away from the belly button.
- You may have been fitted with a unique type of sling-orthosis, and if so, we will provide separate instructions for your specific device.

#### **COLD THERAPY**

- Ice should be used for comfort and swelling for 20 minutes on/20 minutes off for the first 48 or so hours after surgery. You may use ice from a machine, cubes in a plastic bag, or gel cold packs. **Never apply cold therapy directly to exposed skin.**
- After the first 48 hours, use 15-20 minutes every 2-3 hours as long as it continues to help with pain.
- Always use after physical therapy to help with swelling and pain.

#### **EMERGENCIES**

- Contact Dr. Obermeyer's office (847)285-4318 if any of the following are present:
  - Uncontrolled nausea and vomiting, painful swelling or numbness, unrelenting pain, fever  $>101.5^{\circ}$  (low grade fevers 1-3 days after surgery are normal), redness or continuous drainage around incisions (a small amount is normal), color change in foot or toes, **calf pain**
- If you have an urgent concern with bandages, sling or other matter requiring immediate attention on evenings or Saturdays, you might consider contacting our Immediate Orthopedic Care clinic at (847)285-4250.
- **If you are having chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.**

#### **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

- Someone from Dr. Obermeyer's team will call you approximately a day after surgery to check on you and answer any questions.
- Please make your first post-op appointment approximately 10-14 days after surgery if you have not already done so.
- **If you have any questions or concerns about the above please call Dr. Obermeyer's team at (847)285-4318.**