



Thomas Obermeyer, M.D.



obermeyermd.com

O: 847-285-4318

F: 847-885-0130



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## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: SHOULDER ARTHROSCOPY

### MEDICATION

- Most patients will be given a prescription for a narcotic pain medication, Norco (hydrocodone). It is recommended you fill the prescription the day of surgery. The day of surgery you were given an injection by the anesthesiologist of pain medicine into the neck (the “block”) which numbs the shoulder for an average of 12-18 hours after surgery. Before the block wears off the night of surgery, start to take the pills early to prevent spikes in pain when the sensation in the shoulder returns. The pills should be taken as directed, but sometimes a pill or two extra may be necessary for spikes in pain.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness and constipation – to decrease the side effects take the medication with food. An over-the-counter stool softener (docusate/Colace®) may be taken to prevent constipation.
- As long as you have no personal history of adverse response to anti-inflammatories, use an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen (i.e. Advil®/Motrin®) 600-800 mg as frequently as every 8 hours with food for pain in addition to the prescribed pain medication. If you prefer naproxen (Aleve®), 250mg tablets may be taken every 12 hours as needed.
- You may not drive while taking narcotic pain medicine.
- Resume all home medications unless otherwise instructed.
- Call the office immediately if you are having an adverse reaction to the medication.

### WOUND CARE

- You may remove surgical dressings three days after surgery unless otherwise instructed. Do not remove steri-strips (white small stickers on the skin). The steri-strips fall off on their own in a couple weeks. You may shower three days after surgery once the bandages are off, letting the water run over the steri-strips. Do not scrub the incisions and pat dry.
- Once the bandages are off in three days, you may leave the incisions and steri-strips open to air. If there is some slight drainage from one of the incisions, you may reinforce with a band-aid.
- It is normal for the shoulder to slightly bleed and swell for a few days following surgery. If blood soaks onto the bandage do not become alarmed, just reinforce with additional dressing. Bruising in the arm or chest may persist for a few weeks. This is normal and will resolve.
- You may remove the sling to shower but let your arm dangle to the side once the surgical dressings are removed. To access your armpit, lean forward slightly to let your arm dangle away from your side.



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- NO submersion of wounds (bath, hot tub, pool) until a minimum of 2-3 weeks after surgery.

#### 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/SCHOOL

- Most patients can return to desk work or school 3-4 days 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.



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- 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.
- 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.**