

# Rotator Cuff Repair Post Operative Instructions

Your procedure may have been done arthroscopically, “open”, or a combination of the two. The degree of swelling and discomfort you experience may vary depending on how your procedure was performed and exactly what was done to your shoulder. The following guidelines will help you during the post-operative period.

If you have any questions please call our office at **802-229-2663**.

## ICE

To help limit swelling and pain, apply ice to the top of the shoulder. Do this as much as possible for the first few days following surgery (20-30 minutes every 2 hours). The ice should be placed in a plastic bag and the bag placed in a towel to avoid wetting the dressing. If you have a cold therapy device (cryocuff) it should be used as much as you can tolerate and can be used continuously.

## DRESSINGS

During the operation, the shoulder may have been filled with sterile fluid via a pump. The shoulder will be very swollen and there will likely be some drainage from the wounds. You may change the dressings as necessary. Expect the shoulder and arm to become discolored a few days after surgery. If the dressing becomes loosened or soiled, apply new ones (you may use small band aids on the scope incisions and larger ones to cover any larger incisions). You should not allow the wounds to get wet until the 4<sup>th</sup> post-operative day. After the 4<sup>th</sup> day, you may shower as long as the wounds are dry and there is no drainage on the bandages.

## ACTIVITY – SLING

You were given a sling to use to immobilize and unload the shoulder. You should remove the sling periodically to move the elbow. Unless instructed otherwise, the sling may be removed when sitting in a chair or lying in bed. When up and around, you should always wear the sling until instructed otherwise. Don't let the arm hang!

## EXERCISE

### **DO NOT ACTIVELY LIFT THE ARM UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO!**

Diagrams of exercises are included in this packet.

- *Begin Immediately*
  - Range of motion of elbow
- *Begin 1<sup>st</sup> Post-Op Day*
  - Posture and cervical flexibility exercises as tolerated
- *To Be Determined*
  - Pendulum shoulder and isometrics begin when instructed by your surgeon or will be discussed at your first post-op visit

## MEDICATIONS

You were given prescription for a strong pain killer. Use it as prescribed during the post-operative period. After several days, Tylenol, Aspirin or Advil may provide you with enough pain relief. Different people respond differently to medication. If your prescription fails to control your pain or causes side effects please call us.

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## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

A range of surgical procedures done arthroscopically or open makes the recovery course and improvement times variable. You should not compare your course with that of other individuals. There are certain potential “deviations” from the routine course that you should be aware of.

- **Bleeding or Drainage**  
Drainage is expected. A large amount of fluid is used during the procedure and this will drain out of the scope portals. If the dressing becomes saturated, apply another one. If drainage continues after 24 hours, or you think the drainage is excessive, please call the office.
- **Fever**  
If you have a temperature greater than 101 degrees on more than one reading 48 hours or more after surgery, please call the office.
- **Swelling**  
A large amount of fluid is used during the procedure and there is often significant swelling in the shoulder and upper extremity. This should resolve over 3 to 4 days. If swelling increases or you develop any persistent numbness in the hand, please call the office.
- **Unrelenting Pain**  
If severe pain remains 48 hours after surgery, please call the office.