

## Upper Extremity Post-Operative Care w/SPLINTS

### Dressing/Wound Care

- The purpose of dressings and splints is to immobilize and protect the surgery area, and to promote healing. Do NOT get the bandage wet.
- Do NOT Remove the bandages and dressings. They will be changed at your physician or therapist appointment
- If you shower you must cover your dressing so that it does not get wet. Wrap the area in a plastic bag or you may use Glad Press and Seal to cover the dressing and splint. If your dressing or splint becomes soaked, you should phone our office as soon as possible
- Some swelling or bruising around the arm, elbow or hand is expected and can last up to several weeks.
- There may be some bloody spotting on the dressing initially; this is normal. Excessive bleeding that soaks the dressing must be reported to us.
- Use ice over your dressing for the first 24-36 hours after surgery .You may place ice over the bandage for as long as you feel comfortable (recommend at least 20 min./hour). **Do not place ice or ice pack in direct contact with skin.** Be careful, to **keep the dressing dry!**
- Low-grade temperatures up to 101 are common after surgery, please call if temperature rises above 101.4.

### Pain/Swelling/Movement

The goal of pain medication is to reduce your pain and make you more comfortable. Pain medication may not completely relieve all discomfort. Control of swelling is an important part of pain control. **To reduce swelling and pain elevate your operative arm.**

- Use pillow to **elevate the hand** 10-14 inches above heart level. (An example would be like holding a can of soda to your mouth)

- Immediately after surgery you may be placed in a sling.
- Please wean the sling as pain permits. If you have had a nerve block please allow the block to wear off so that you have control of the arm again.
- **Use arm sling only when ambulating for long periods of time.** Otherwise, elevate as directed above. Continued use of sling does not provide proper elevation of extremity to prevent swelling.
- Do not put any weight on the part of the body that had the surgery.
- Perform range-of-motion several times per day to prevent stiffness.
- If you are in a splint and it is positioned so that one or more of your fingers are free, we **encourage gentle movement of the free fingers while in the dressing.** If your splint blocks motion it is deliberate and we ask that finger and / or hand motion is avoided. Also, if the splint does not include the elbow straighten and bend the elbow 4-5 times daily to prevent stiffness.
- Remember MOVE IT BUT NOT USE IT.

## Medication

- The anesthesiologist may have given you a nerve block (an injection in your neck), to numb your hand and arm. This is to help control your pain. It is normal to experience some numbness and tingling in your arm and fingers up to approximately 18 hours after surgery. You may also not be able to move your hand or fingers while the block is working which is normal. The block typically lasts 12-24 hours.
- (Unless instructed otherwise by your primary care doctor or myself) Alleve and Tylenol can be taken to help control your pain. Please make these the mainstay of your regimen taking them regularly regardless of pain levels. Alleve is processed by the kidney and Tylenol by the liver so they can be taken at the same time without a negative effect.
  - Tylenol 1000mg PO every 6 hours
  - Alleve 220mg PO twice daily

- You will have received a prescription for pain medication. Do not operate machinery or drive while taking this medication. Pain medication may cause nausea or vomiting.
- **\*\*\*\*DO NOT WAIT FOR THE BLOCK TO WEAR OFF TO START YOUR PAIN MEDICATIONS. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU START THESE IMMEDIATELY WHEN YOU GET HOME TO AVOID A PERIOD OF UNCOMFORTABLENESS**
- Any severe itching, hives or difficulty breathing, please call immediately.

### **Hand Therapy**

- On your first visit after surgery you will be given a prescription for hand therapy.
- **This will be one of the important steps leading to your recovery.**

### **Return Visit**

- If you do not already have a scheduled post-operative visit please call for an appointment on the next business day.
- If you have any problems, do not wait for an appointment, please call the office.