



## Postoperative Instructions Elbow Ulnar Collateral Ligament (UCL) Reconstruction

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**PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS COMPLETELY AND ASK FOR CLARIFICATION IF NECESSARY - DIRECT QUESTIONS TO YOUR NURSE BEFORE LEAVING THE SURGERY CENTER OR VIA PHONE/EMAIL TO DR BODEN'S STAFF AFTER ARRIVING HOME**

### Wound Care

- You will be put in an immobilizing splint on the day of surgery. Do not remove this splint until post op appointment 10-14 days following surgery.
- 48 hours after surgery it is ok to shower. **THE SPLINT MUST REMAIN DRY.** Please cover with a plastic bag and tape for showering.
- After the splint is removed, you will transition into a hinged elbow brace. Sutures will be removed in the office at this time.
- You may begin showering and getting your wound site wet after your first post-op appointment. To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry. Do **NOT** soak incisions. Do **NOT** apply ointments or creams to incisions.

### Medications

- Local anesthetics are injected into the wound at the time of surgery. This will wear off within 8-12 hours and it is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery when swelling peaks.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation. To decrease the side effects take the medication with food. If constipation occurs, consider taking an over the counter laxative.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medications changed.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication
- If you are having pain that is not being controlled by the pain medication prescribed, you may take an over the counter anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen or naproxen in between doses of pain medication. This will help to decrease pain and decrease the amount of narcotic medication required. Please take as directed on the bottle.
- For 2 weeks following surgery take one 81mg aspirin twice daily to lower the risk of developing a blood clot after surgery. Please contact the office should severe distal arm pain occur or significant swelling of the distal arm/hand occur.



## Activity

- For the first 7-10 days after surgery, you will remain in immobilizing splint. You will schedule an inperson splint removal visit 7-10 days from surgery.
- After your first postoperative visit, you will transition to a hinged elbow brace that you will wear at all times until 6 weeks from the day of surgery. You may remove the elbow brace for hygiene.
- When sleeping or resting, inclined positions (ie: reclining chair) placing a pillow under the forearm for support may provide better comfort.
- It is ok to sleep however you are comfortable.
- Do not engage in activities which increase elbow pain over the first 7-10 days following surgery.
- Unless otherwise instructed the arm should remain in the sling at all times.
- Avoid long periods of sitting or long distance traveling for 2 weeks.
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician.
- May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable
- You will be placed in a splint where you cannot straighten your elbow for 1-2 weeks following surgery. You are to wear sling at all times while the splint is in place.
- Air travel is permitted 5 days after surgery. Air travel and immobility increase the risk of blood clots. Unless you have been previously instructed to avoid aspirin products for medical reasons, or if you are under age 16, ensure that you are taking 81 mg baby aspirin twice daily beginning the day after surgery to minimize the risk of blood clot.

## Ice Therapy

- Icing is very important in the initial post-operative period and should begin immediately after surgery.
- Ice packs 20 minutes every 2 hours daily until your first post-operative visit. Care should be taken with icing to avoid frostbite to the skin.

## Exercise

- Begin exercises 3x daily starting the day after surgery (wrist flexion/extension) unless otherwise instructed. See last page for reference. If the exercises cause pain, stop and try again later in the day.
- Begin finger flexion and extension on the first post-operative day to help decrease swelling.
- Elbow stiffness and discomfort is normal following surgery.
- Formal physical therapy (PT) begins after your first post op appointment. A prescription and protocol will be provided at your first post-op visit.

## Emergencies

- Contact Dr. Boden's office if you experience any of the following:
  - Painful swelling or numbness (note that some swelling and numbness is normal)
  - Unrelenting pain
  - Fever (over 101° - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills



- Redness around incisions
- Color change in distal arm and/or hand
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting
- Calf pain
- If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention proceed to the nearest emergency room.

### Follow-up Care

- If you do not already have a post-operative appointment scheduled, please contact our scheduler at 502-588-3630.
- Typically the first post-operative appointment following surgery is 10-14 days following surgery.
- If you have any further questions please contact the office or sent a message through MyChart.

### ELBOW POST OPERATIVE EXERCISE

#### WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION



Actively bend wrist forward.  
Then backwards as far as you can.  
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.