



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

- Loosen bandage if swelling or progressive numbness occurs in the extremity.
- It is normal for the joint to bleed and swell following surgery — if blood soaks onto the ACE bandage, simply reinforce with additional gauze dressing for the remainder of the day and re-check. The ACE bandage can be laundered in normal fashion and reused.
- Remove ACE bandage and gauze **3 days after surgery** and replace with a clean dry dressing. Then change dressing daily with clean dry dressing until dressing is completely dry for 2 days in a row. Then may leave incision open to air.
- 3 days after surgery it is ok to shower. Allow water to run over incision and pat dry. Do NOT soak incisions or submerge in water.
- Your sutures will be removed for you at your first postoperative clinic appointment **7-10 days** after surgery.
- 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

- Remain in sling at all times other than personal hygiene, wardrobe changes, and exercises.
- 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.
- 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, elbow flexion/extension, pendulum swings, shoulder range of motion) 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 EXERCISES

WRIST FLEXION / EXTENSION



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

ELBOW FLEXION / EXTENSION



With palm either UP, DOWN, or THUMBSIDE UP
gently bend elbow as far as possible.
Hold for 5 seconds.
Then straighten arm as far as possible.
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day.

SHOULDER RANGE OF MOTION

(Self-stretching activity)

Slide arm up wall with palm
toward you by moving
closer to the wall.
Hold 10-15 seconds.
Repeat 3 times.
Do 3 sessions per day.



PENDULUM SWINGS

(Clockwise/counterclockwise)



Let arm move in a clockwise circle,
then counterclockwise by rocking body
weight in a circular pattern.
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day

PENDULUM SWINGS

(Side to side)



Gently move arm from side to side
by rocking body weight from side to side.
Let arm swing freely.
Repeat 10-15 times. Do 3 sessions per day