



POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS – Hand/Wrist

Your Surgeon:

Peter DeNoble, MD

David Ratliff, MD

Call 973-898-5999 to make an appointment for _____ post-operatively.

Dressings:

- Your hand will be bandaged and/or splinted following your surgery.
Please remove this dressing ____ days after your surgery and replace with a Nexcare bandage, which are water resistant and therefore more occlusive than a BandAid. Once the dressing is removed, you may begin showering. Please do not immerse your hand/soak in water, such as in a bath. Do not scrub your wound. Leave your dressing in place until your follow-up visit.
- Please keep your dressing clean and dry at all times. You may shower tomorrow with your arm elevated above you head and dressing covered with a plastic bag, sealed with tape to make it watertight. A plastic trash bag works well, or a commercial cast-protective bag can be purchased at most drug stores.
- If a cast or splint has been applied to your arm, do not make holes in it or stick objects down it to scratch.

Diet:

- You will be started on clear liquids immediately following surgery. Once you tolerate clear liquids, your diet may be progressed to your normal diet as tolerated. Do not try to eat too much too soon. This may result in nausea due to the narcotic pain medication and anesthesia. If you feel nauseous, try clear liquids and crackers only.
- Cigarette smoking (even just one or two) can affect your healing and rate of complications. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you do not smoke for one month after your surgery.
- Do not drink any alcohol (beer, wine or liquor) for one week after surgery or while taking narcotic pain medication if it was prescribed.

Medication:

- You can resume taking all of the medications you were taking routinely prior to surgery unless told otherwise by your prescribing physician.
- You need to be as comfortable as possible, but understand that no amount of pain medication, ice, elevation and rest will completely eliminate your pain after surgery.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Aleve, and Naprosyn may be used to supplement a prescription pain medication if it was provided.
- If no prescription pain medication was provided, you MAY use Tylenol (acetaminophen), in addition to, or instead of NSAIDs.
- If prescribed, narcotic pain medication can also cause drowsiness, lightheadedness, itching, and constipation. Over-the-counter stool softeners and increased fluid intake can help relieve constipation.
- Pain medicine should be taken only “as needed” per your doctor’s instructions to help control your pain. Your pain should diminish over the next several days, allowing you to decrease the medication quantity and time in between doses until you stop.
- If a regional nerve block has been used for anesthesia, it is common to experience numbness and tingling in the arm for twelve hours or longer after surgery. In order to get “in-front of” the pain, take your pain medication as soon as you start to feel the nerve block wear off

Activities:

- Keep hand/wrist at about the level of your heart at all times for the next 48-72 hours, or when it no longer is painful and throbbing when you lower it below your heart.
- This can be accomplished by resting your elbow at your side with your hand/wrist propped up on a pillow or two while sitting or lying down.
- A sling will not hold your hand/wrist above you heart and it may also cause shoulder and elbow stiffness. Therefore, it should only be used when outside of the house or if otherwise instructed by your surgeon (i.e. soft tissue repair).
- Move all joints of the extremity that are not immobilized unless TENDON OR NERVE REPAIR WAS PERFORMED.
- Avoid all activities which may re-injure your hand or finger such as lifting objects heavier than a book, or rigorous physical activity.
- You should not drive a car with your hand/arm in a splint or while taking narcotic pain medication.

When to contact your doctor:

- √ If you have a persistent temperature of 101.5°F or greater
- √ If you develop any signs of wound infection (increased pain, redness, swelling, pus-like drainage)
- √ If you have uncontrollable nausea/vomiting post operatively
- √ If your fingers appear blue or cold
- √ If you have persistent bleeding through your dressing
- √ If you have progressively increased numbness or pain
- √ If your dressing feels too tight or painful

Medical equipment instructions: _____

Specimen(s) were sent to the lab for evaluation. Follow up with your physician for results.

Written postoperative instructions received and understood.

COPY TO PATIENT

Signature of Patient/Parent/Conservator/Guardian

Date/Time

Written postoperative instructions discussed with patient/responsible party, all questions answered at this time.

RN Signature

Date/Time

Physician Signature

Date/Time